THE GENIUS OF GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

THE Nation.

HOW TO GROW DEMOCRACY

SEPTEMBER 21, 2009
TheNation.com

A SPECIAL ISSUE FEATURING:

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Grace Lee Boggs • LaDonna Redmond
Michael Pollan • Anna Lappé
Katha Pollitt • Dayo Olopade
Raj Patel • John Nichols

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Letters

Four-Star Food Favorites

We invited readers to tell us about their most beloved food institutions. Neighborhood co-ops, farmers' markets and one-of-a-kind stores and restaurants topped their lists. Below, a flavorful sample. —*The Editors*

NEW YORK CITY/LE SUEUR, MINN.
Paul Wellstone is gone from Minnesota, his loss still felt acutely, but the St. Peter Food Co-op, south of the Twin Cities, continues on strong. Old hippies and new hipsters meet there, the ethos progressive, though an occasional Republican can be found sampling the fare. More than a cooperative grocery store, it offers a self-serve deli and regularly sponsors health and food seminars.

With the food tasty, healthy and often vegan, the St. Peter Food Co-op habit is hard to break. But who's trying? This establishment, begun in the '70s, is an influential activist community built around sensible eating.
PHILIP DACEY

STANFORD, CALIF.
JJ&F's grocery store in Palo Alto is surely one of the last old-fashioned family-owned food stores in California, and it's an integral part of our neighborhood. The prices are reasonable, the produce is fresh and the meat is first-rate, but the same is true of Trader Joe's. What's different about JJ&F is the welcoming atmosphere. The owners and longtime clerks greet you by name when you walk in and are glad to exchange news and maybe a little gossip. With a coffee urn near the entrance, it's as much a social club as a grocery store.

Unfortunately, like most good things today, JJ&F is in danger of closing. The owners of the land want to expand the one-story store to 13,000 square feet and build a high-end office building above it, along with apartments. The city planning commission has balked, saying the project is too big and would clog already limited parking in the area. But at this point no one can be sure what will happen. I do know that for me and many of my neighbors, JJ&F is indispensable—not only as a place to shop but as an expression of community in our increasingly fragmented society.
RACHELLE MARSHALL

SAN FRANCISCO
My vote for the best of our food culture goes to Mission Pie here in San Francisco. Organic, sustainable, local… delicious. These people truly walk the walk. They grow their own wheat for the pie crust (a used combine was shipped in from Indiana) as well as their own fruits, vegetables and other ingredients (chickens, eggs, etc.) for the fillings. And they mentor at-risk inner-city kids in the process of planting, growing and harvesting on the farm and ultimately serving in the shop. The pies, by the way, are always fabulous.
CAB COVAY

NEW YORK CITY
In June my 7-year-old daughter attended a cooking class at the Sylvia Center in Manhattan. They used fresh farm ingredients to make pizza, pasta, stuffed zucchini boats and barbecue sauce, not to mention some amazing fruit desserts. My daughter had a blast. Most important, she became aware of all the effort, on many people's parts, that it takes to prepare great, healthy food. She decided for herself that the rewards made it worth it.
BARRIE SCHWARTZ

OAKLAND, CALIF.
Lucky to be a denizen of foodie heaven—the East Bay area in California, home of Chez Panisse—I find the hard part of writing about my favorite food place is selecting just one in the midst of plenty. But it has to be the Sunday Temescal farmers' market, where one can have it all: local, in-season, largely organic food.

Not only is there the Blue Bottle espresso stand for a latte or Gibraltar (espresso with a touch of steamed milk in a shot glass) but there is, often, Bakesale Betty with the blue wig, who brings ginger/pear scones and other goodies. Then there's Donna's tamales;

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By Any Means Necessary

Senator Edward Kennedy was a fighting liberal, a lion to the very end—often among timid cubs. His final fight was for quality, affordable healthcare for all. As recently as July, Kennedy called it "the cause of my life" and argued eloquently that "quality care shouldn't depend on your financial resources, or the type of job you have, or the medical condition you face." In the coming months, President Obama and a Democratic Congress will determine whether that cause is realized. Obama has the chance to fix a healthcare system that fails nearly 50 million Americans with no insurance and millions more who are dangerously underinsured, or denied care, or driven into bankruptcy when they get sick.

EDITORIAL

Obama may turn out to be one of the few reform presidents in modern history—a potential that Senator Kennedy recognized when he endorsed his candidacy. A reform president takes on the status quo to improve the lives of the majority and ensure that America lives up to its ideals. Franklin Roosevelt was the very model of a reform president. Lyndon Johnson was pushed to become a reformer by the turbulence of his times.

When reform presidents take on the status quo, they confront ferocious, well-organized, reactionary opposition. We're seeing today—with right-wing groups comparing Obama to Hitler and healthcare reform to socialism—what Roosevelt faced from the American Liberty League, which, heedless of the contradiction, alternated between calling him a socialist and a fascist. Like Obama, Roosevelt faced well-funded business lobbies. And in Catholic demagogue Father Coughlin, Roosevelt had his own Rush Limbaugh/Glenn Beck.

The rabid protesters opposing Obama are representatives of a long national tradition based in an irrational fear of a strong central government and buttressed by the insurance, hospital and pharmaceutical lobbies. The president acknowledged the parallels with older battles for reform when he said, "These struggles always boil down to a contest between hope and fear. That was true in the debate over Social Security, when FDR was accused of being a socialist. That was true when JFK and LBJ tried to pass Medicare. And it's true in this debate today."

Indeed, those words would be a valuable frame for the address on healthcare that Obama will deliver to a joint session of Congress on September 9. He would be wise to place his agenda in the long American tradition of reform—especially the two most popular programs of modern times, Social Security and Medicare, which were bitterly opposed by Republicans.

We hope the president, his Congressional allies and millions of Americans will be inspired to honor and do battle for Kennedy's lifelong cause. Surely Obama knows that the Senate's fighting liberal would not have put the fate of the nation's healthcare into the hands of private insurance companies, which increase their quarterly earnings by denying people care. Reform is not possible without a public alternative to the private companies, one based on coverage for all and quality care rather than profit. A bill with a strong public option would be a victory for all those who seek a healthier, more humane country in which healthcare is a right, not a commodity.

Obama often speaks of his desire to get beyond the partisan divide, but what good is bipartisanship at this moment? The Republican Party, which long ago jettisoned its liberal wing, does not simply want to criticize or modify Democratic healthcare proposals. It is determined to

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Barbara Crossette: Obama unshackles global AIDS work

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Norman Birnbaum: Memories of Kennedy

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Video: Hurricane Katrina's hidden race war: four years later

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cripple or kill reform, and with it Obama's presidency—in the words of Senator Jim DeMint, to make the failure of healthcare legislation Obama's "Waterloo." It's high time for Obama to part ways with the Party of No, which has been stoking outlandish fears about government "death panels" and "socialism," and forge a solid majority of Democrats in support of sweeping reform—including as many Blue Dogs as will sign on for the sake of the country and the party. So far, these conservative Democrats have been listening to the lobbies and their well-funded scare machine, not to the American people, who want protection from grasping insurance companies that give less and less coverage at more and more cost.

With large majorities in both houses of Congress, Democrats have the best chance in years to pass a strong bill, and they should do it by any means necessary—and that includes using the budget reconciliation or cloture process to block a GOP filibuster. If the Dems put forth a watered-down "bipartisan" bill with no public option, they will be justly blamed for its inevitable failure—and will see ugly results in the 2010 midterm elections. If, on the other hand, Republicans manage to defeat a good bill, let them try to explain themselves to midterm voters, who will still be at the mercy of Big Insurance and Big Pharma.

As Mike Lux explains in *The Progressive Revolution*, every so often in American history a window to change opens, and the combination of crisis, leadership and movement makes reform possible. "That window is open right now," Lux writes, "and President Obama, to his credit, is trying to keep it open." If Obama gives up this fight and caves in to lobbyists—and if Congressional Democrats and the grassroots fail to deliver the support he needs—that window will slam shut, and with it the chance for reform, which might not come for another generation.

That would be a tragedy—and no way to honor the Lion of the Senate.

Vigilantes: Free to Roam?

COMMENT

In the months after Hurricane Katrina, word began to circulate that armed white men in New Orleans had opened fire on African-Americans seeking to flee the floodwaters. These stories were dismissed as paranoid thinking, lumped in with tales of man-eating alligators and government officials who had conspired to flood the Lower Ninth Ward. One man, Donnell Herrington, who said he'd been the victim of such a shooting and had the scars to prove it, was shown on video by Spike Lee in *When the Levees Broke*, whose New Orleans premiere Mayor Ray Nagin attended. Still no police—or reporters—chose to pursue the matter.

Two years ago A.C. Thompson did. He began with a tip from author Rebecca Solnit; while researching her new book *A Paradise Built in Hell*, she'd come across a white evacuee who said her relatives had sent e-mails bragging about arming themselves and killing at least one African-American man. Solnit first approached two Pulitzer Prize–winning reporters, but only Thompson, who'd cut his teeth at Bay Area alternative weeklies, sensed

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a stunning story. With support from *The Nation* and The Nation Institute's Investigative Fund, where I am an editor, he took several reporting trips to New Orleans. Most victims and potential witnesses had been displaced and were nearly impossible to find; police officers refused to talk, out of fear of retaliation. But one person at a time, Thompson reconstructed a chilling chain of events for his January 5 *Nation* articles.

What he found in the end was evidence, culled from emergency room doctors, victims, shooters, witnesses and autopsies obtained through an Investigative Fund lawsuit, that at least eleven African-Americans were shot by white vigilantes, some shouting racial epithets; several may have been killed. In another gruesome incident, shooting victim Henry Glover was left to bleed to death while his would-be rescuers were handcuffed and beaten by local police. Herrington was chased by vigilantes shouting, "Get that nigger!" as they pounded him with buckshot. It was as if Thompson had uncovered a scene from an earlier time—1925 or 1955, not 2005.

"Victims, perpetrators, witnesses—nobody in law enforcement had ever spoken with them," Thompson recalls. "It was mind-boggling." The New Orleans Police Department had not initiated an investigation into a single case.

As we reach the fourth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, arrests may finally come about, through federal law enforcement: the FBI has opened an investigation into the Glover case, and in May federal prosecutors empaneled a grand jury to look into the possibility that police officers shot him and destroyed the evidence. In early August, FBI agents raided an NOPD office and seized files and a computer hard drive from a homicide detective assigned to investigate the death. Herrington tells *The Nation* that he, too, was interviewed by the FBI, indicating that the probe has gone beyond the Glover case to encompass the broader pattern of post-Katrina violence. Thompson, who continues to report on the vigilante attacks for ProPublica, says FBI agents have interviewed other people from the neighborhood as well.

But in New Orleans, the wheels of justice have rusted. After Thompson's story broke last December, the NOPD announced it would open an investigation. But according to Herrington, as of late August, the police have yet to interview him about the case. "My life is important to a lot of people. I mean something in this world," Herrington said. "For me to think the guys who shot me got away with it, it makes me angry and it makes me feel bad."

ESTHER KAPLAN

Food Without Fear

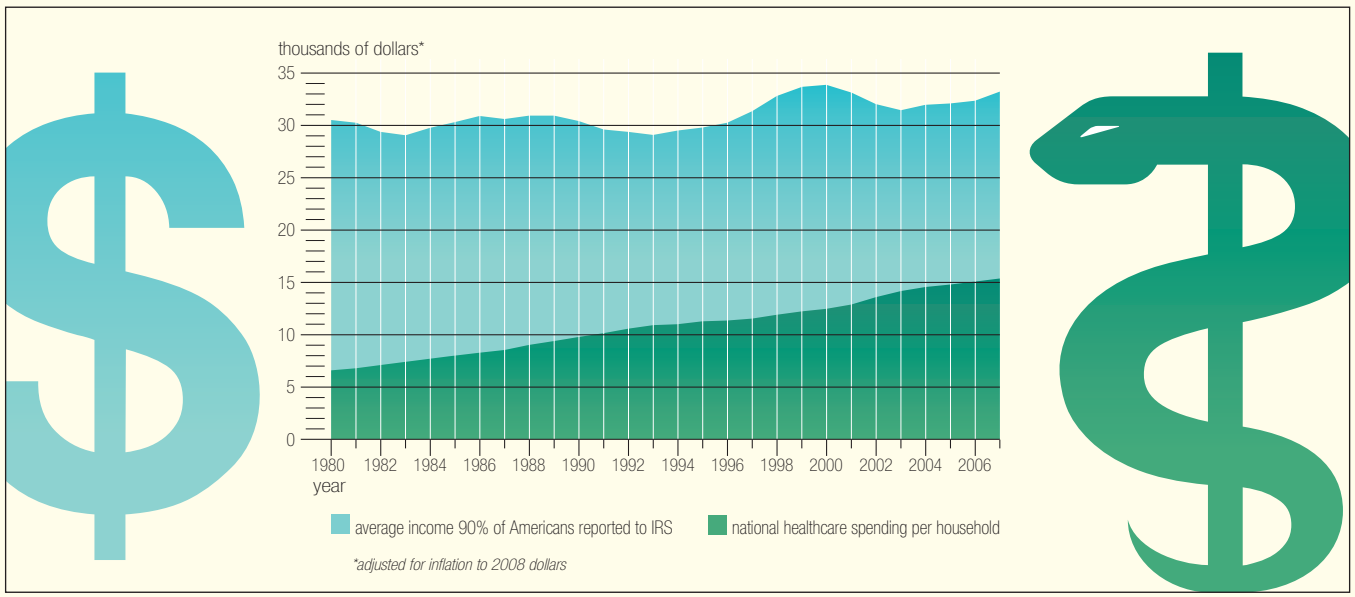
Peanut butter can kill you. And spinach. And maybe cookie dough. That's what we've learned so far this year, as contaminated foods have claimed lives, caused permanent disabilities and sent thousands of Americans to emergency rooms. The toll has been immense for some time—on

BY THE NUMBERS

Rising healthcare costs are killing wage increases. From 1980 to 2007 the average cash income for the vast majority of Americans (the bottom 90 percent) increased only $2,697, to $33,321. Healthcare spending per household rose more than three times as much, increasing $8,797, to $15,369, according to the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services. Household healthcare spending now equals almost half of the average income of the vast majority of Americans.

DAVID CAY JOHNSTON

David Cay Johnston, who received a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of taxes, is a columnist for Tax Notes *and the author of* Free Lunch.



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average, 5,000 lives are lost each year and 300,000 hospitalizations are required—but this year's outbreaks of salmonella poisoning linked to bad peanuts and the spread of *E. coli* bacteria on spinach garnered enough headlines to break a legislative log-jam and maybe, just maybe, open the way for the most sweeping reform of the nation's food safety system in fifty years.

That's a big deal, not just for consumers but for everyone who worries about the public health systems undermined by the "Republican revolution" Congresses of the 1990s and the neglect of the Bush/Cheney years. No matter how the mangled health-care reform debate plays out this fall, the reports of death, disease and peanut butter recalls have created an opening that could make 2009 the year a progressive president and Congress enact landmark public health legislation. On the eve of the August recess, the House approved the Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009 with a bipartisan 283-to-142 vote. That fifty-four Republicans joined 229 Democrats in backing a relatively good bill bodes well for the possibility that the Senate will back bold reform. How bold remains to be seen, however, as a Senate that should be working to muscle up the House bill is instead coming under pressure to weaken it. That can't be allowed to happen. As Caroline Smith DeWaal, food safety director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, says, Congress must "give consumers a full loaf when it comes to food safety."

COMMENT

The Senate should act quickly, for reasons of the public good and politics. There is talk about having the Senate put off the food safety debate until after it wrestles with healthcare reform. Bad idea. The outbreak of bipartisanship in the House illustrates that it may be possible to get Democrats and at least some Republicans to stand up to the corporations that want to play politics with public health.

And it must act without pulling punches. "The Food and Drug Administration, which is responsible for the safety of over 80 percent of the foods we eat, has been hamstrung in its effort to better ensure the safety of the food supply by an outdated law and inadequate resources," says Erik Olson, who directs food and consumer-product safety initiatives for the Pew Charitable Trusts. Olson says the House-backed legislation "will help give the government stronger tools and more resources to safeguard our food supply." The key word there is "help." The bill, a product of compromises, negotiations and rewrites that came at the behest of organic farmers—who objected that they, rather than agribusiness, could end up bearing the brunt of the burden imposed by the reforms—left the House as a good, if still imperfect, plan for improving the system. Instead of the inspection of food plants every ten years, on average, the legislation will require more frequent inspections. Instead of cursory reviews of imported foods and food byproducts, the bill makes it possible to establish and enforce strict standards, and it empowers the FDA to trace the sources of food contamination and recall tainted food. That should make it possible for health authorities to respond quickly and efficiently not just to high-profile outbreaks but to the steady toll of food-borne illnesses.

Though the House legislation was crafted by senior Democrats with records as defenders of consumers, like John Dingell and Rosa DeLauro, it was constrained by agribusiness, which succeeded in keeping limits on the FDA's monitoring of beef, pork and poultry production (which remain under the oversight of the Agriculture Department). And agribusiness dramatically reduced the annual licensing fees for food manufacturers, designed to fund the expansion of FDA inspections. The fees will still generate roughly $160 million, but if the Senate restores the fees to their initially proposed levels, it will more than double that amount. In addition, members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee should look for smart strategies—grants and waivers for small farms and rules that are flexible enough to guarantee safe food while keeping smallholders on the land—to assure that the burden for financing food safety initiatives falls on multinational firms that operate big processing and packing plants, not on organic farmers and growers who peddle fruits and vegetables from roadside stands and greenmarkets.

The fight for food safety, rooted in the progressive muckraking of a century ago, will not be finished soon. But this fall could be a turning point. Savvy senators like Dick Durbin, who has taken the lead in this struggle, could improve the legislation in their chamber and then work with Dingell, DeLauro and other friends of consumers and working farmers in the House to craft the best bill possible.

DeLauro is right when she says, "This is a good start, but there is more work to be done. I strongly believe that the best way to protect the public health and keep our food free of contagion is to streamline the FDA into two separate agencies within HHS, so that food and drug safety both get the full and comprehensive attention they deserve. But, for now, this bill is a solid first step in creating a comprehensive farm-to-fork safety system that can protect American families from the many dangers of contaminated food."

JOHN NICHOLS

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Cheney Offers Sharp Defense of C.I.A. Interrogation Tactics

—*Headline in the* New York Times

Again, Dick says that torture's good,
As waterboarders understood,
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To Dirty Harry's Hollywood.
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Ten Things.

Ten Things You Can Do to Start a Community Garden

Spiraling food prices and concerns over where food comes from have consumers looking for alternatives to what's in their supermarket produce bins. Community gardens help people band together to gain control of their own food. Rebecca Hart, an avid *Nation* reader and Portland, Oregon–area resident, has spent twenty years acquiring the expertise in horticulture to become a certified master gardener. Here are her suggestions for starting a community garden in your neighborhood.

1 Gather like-minded people and organize into a group. When the plot is located and you are ready to begin, apportion and delegate tasks. For tips on organizing a garden community, writing a compact for the group, formulating rules, allocating plots and so on, download the "Community Garden Start-Up Guide" from the University of California, Davis, website, which features advice and tips on creating flexible contracts (celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/garden/articles/startup_guide.html).

2 Locate suitable land with access to water and electricity. You'll need fencing to keep out four-legged marauders. Vacant lots, schoolyards, retirement homes and churchyards are potential sites. Get permission from property owners.

3 Plan and design your garden carefully. It should have full sun for a minimum of six to eight hours a day. Consider how much land will be needed to give each family ample space for its own plot. For more information, go to communitygarden.org and click on "Learn." When laying out plots, be sure to leave enough space for paths for walking and trundling wheelbarrows or carts. Remember: many gardens can be grown in less than six months; typically a garden calendar runs from May (after the last frost, when soil has dried out from spring rains) through October (or the first killing frost). Go to cdc.noaa.gov/data/usclimate/states.fast.html to find out your state's climate.

4 Explain clearly to your group that it takes hard work to grow plants successfully and make sure everyone commits to sharing the labor. Inventory the skills of members and ask neighborhood gardeners to share their experience. For good basic information on plants, see websites of groups like the National Gardening Association (garden.org).

5 Decide whether your garden will be organic, natural or "anything goes." Incorporate into your contract the rules governing the type of garden you have chosen. If you have an on-site compost pile, plan to educate gardeners about the differences between carbon- and nitrogen-based compost, and also about what does not go into the compost. For one of the best discussions on the role of bacteria-enriched compost, see *Gardening at the Dragon's Gate* by Wendy Johnson (gardeningatthedragonsgate.com).

6 Barter where you can to cut expenses. If you need a toolshed built, for example, trade produce for carpentry skills. Scour yard sales for cheap implements. If you have to raise money for fencing, building materials or other items, create a fundraising appeal tailored to the community. Check out websites like craigslist.org for garden supplies and tools.

7 Assemble tools and supplies: hoses, couplings, sprinklers, watering devices, wheelbarrows. New soil is less expensive if purchased by the truckload. Decide which tools and supplies are for communal use.

8 Write down your garden's goals and record the progress in a garden journal. Set up a website. Tweet and blog your successes! Spread the word to local media outlets. Ask farmers at your local farmers' market for expert advice on problems you're having with your crop. Chances are pretty good that your problem is not unique and that you will find a solution. If you live in an urban area, see foodsecurity.org/urbanag.html.

9 Share your produce with neighbors who don't have the time or the means to grow a garden. Encourage them to join you next season. According to ampleharvest.org, more than 36 million Americans (12 percent of the population) are hungry and rely on food pantries to help sustain their families. For USDA rules on donating grown or gleaned foods, see www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/appc.htm.

10 Get to work! Even if next spring is the soonest you can begin, now is the time to plan. In some cases, grants are available for getting a garden started or for taking gardens to another level. Go to Kids Gardening (kidsgardening.com/ygg.asp) to apply for funds for 2010.

CONCEIVED BY WALTER MOSLEY with research by Rae Gomes

"Ten Things" is a monthly feature. Readers who wish to propose ideas for it should e-mail NationTenThings@gmail.com.

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Alexander Cockburn

Obama's Last Chance

Back to town comes Barack Obama, to plummeting polls and sour columns rolling his presidency into the hearse. The memory doesn't offer much comfort, but the previous two Democratic presidents endured similar *rentrées* to the nation's capital.

When Bill Clinton returned from his outing to Martha's Vineyard in the late summer of 1993, the collapse of his administration was already three months old. He was well into his rebirth cycle as a committed Republican. As an opposing, progressive challenge to business as usual, even by the wan standard of its own timid promises, his presidency had decisively failed by the closing week of May, on the last Saturday of which he signaled surrender by recruiting the old Nixon/Reagan/Bush hand David Gergen as his new public relations chief.

Jimmy Carter achieved his zenith as an agent of positive change on his second day in office: "I, Jimmy Carter, President of the United States, do hereby grant a full, complete and unconditional pardon to: (1) all persons who may have committed any offense between August 4, 1964 and March 28, 1973 in violation of the Military Selective Service Act…and (2) all persons heretofore convicted, irrespective of the date of conviction, of any offense committed between August 4, 1964 and March 28, 1973 in violation of the Military Selective Service Act…restoring to them full political, civil and other rights."

On August 6, 1979, Carter formally surrendered power by installing Paul Volcker as chairman of the Federal Reserve, tasked with waging war on inflation, with large sacrifices imposed on those who had voted for Carter.

In terms of popularity and political strength, Clinton peaked at the Democratic National Convention in New York. Decline was not long delayed. On election day in November 1992, the long sunset had already commenced. By the time of the inauguration, the Clinton administration was already low in the water. The president-elect and his advisers had destroyed their room for maneuver in the formulation of economic policy. They fanned budget-cutting hysteria by accepting the silly Republican claim that—surprise!—the prospective deficit was going to be more severe than expected.

By the time Clinton took the presidential oath, his presidency was, as anything other than a vehicle for economic orthodoxy and Wall Street wisdom, in the ditch. A few days later, he pushed the wreck into the crusher with his catastrophic handling of the issue of gays in the military. Before the week was out, the Pentagon had its majority in Congress and the Christian right was trumpeting renewal and victory. The health insurance debacle toppled all surviving hopes for constructive change.

It's hard to know when Obama peaked. Was it at the convention in Denver? Or the election-night rally in Chicago? Or his formal inauguration in January? By the time of his election he had already signed on to Paulson's bailout of the banks. By the hour Chief Justice Roberts swore him in, he'd chosen as his top economic advisers the bankers' men, Lawrence Summers and Tim Geithner, with Volcker on the sideline. By the end of his first month we knew Wall Street and Goldman Sachs were firmly in control.

Here we are in September, and what have Obama's liberal supporters got to cling to by way of evidence that positive change is on the way? Economically, we seem to be heading—well ahead of schedule—into 1937, the year the New Deal crashed onto the rocks. The energy bill, driven by junk science and junk nostrums, has been a detour into disaster. Health reform is levitating toward the graveyard, borne along by Blue Dog Democrats, nerveless salesmanship by the White House and as ripe an eruption of insanity by the know-nothing legions as I've ever witnessed. In a way it's inspiring to see ideological principle trump raw self-interest. Night after night one can see men tottering out from million-dollar life-saving procedures in the VA hospital to hurl invective against "socialized medicine." Who'd have thought that the "healthcare debate" would be the beard for Klan rallies?

Many Obama dreamers hoped that their man would introduce some minimal shift for the better in America's relationship with the rest of the world. Now all they have to look forward to is Gen. Stanley McChrystal marching up to Capitol Hill and into the Oval Office to demand more troops for Afghanistan. In relations with Russia Obama and Vice President Biden have remained substantively committed to NATO expansionism. In Latin America, the handling of the coup in Honduras and warm relations with Colombia's Uribe suggest a sinister larger strategy of counterattack on the leftist trends of the past few years.

It's a dark vista overall. Some big opportunities—like a frontal assault on the power of the banks and of Wall Street—will never return. What can Obama do to regain the initiative?

There are two men capable of uniting large numbers of Americans in detestation: Dick Cheney and George Bush, in that order. Typically, Obama has hopped from foot to foot on his administration's posture toward our Home Team Torturers. Now Attorney General Eric Holder has gingerly inclined to the view that maybe, perhaps, the US government should inch toward the legal standard on prosecution of torturers required of it by a law signed by Ronald Reagan, not to mention the Geneva Conventions.

With their drive for impeachment, the Republicans dominated the headlines and all but paralyzed the Clinton White House for two years. Now it should be payback time. Obama's pledge to the American people: Cheney and Bush behind bars by 2012, plus Gonzales, Yoo, Addington and the rest of the pack. We crave drama. From Obama we're not getting it, except in the form of racist rallies. This is his last, best chance. ■

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Katha Pollitt

The Female Gourmet

There were many things I loved about Nora Ephron's clever and affectionate *Julie & Julia*, the feel-good hit of the summer for foodies and nonfoodies alike. Meryl Streep radiated warmth, excitement and cheer as Julia Child, learning to cook and writing *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in 1950s Paris. Amy Adams was vulnerable and endearing as Julie Powell, the drifting secretary-hipster who finds a purpose in life (and fame and fortune) when she spends a year cooking all 524 recipes from The Book and blogging about it. I loved that the most violent moment was the boning of a duck, that the only technological gizmos were pots and pans and kitchen knives and that the proper slicing of a sackful of onions served as a hilarious plot point. I enjoyed the American-in-Paris hokeyness of the Julia episodes: Ephron's Paris is a Francophile fantasy, all high-ceilinged nineteenth-century apartments, lovable shopkeepers and one fantastic meal after another. You would never know that only four years before Julia and Paul Child arrived in France, World War II was in full swing, Nazi occupation, roundups of Jews and all. I enjoyed, although somewhat less, Julie's up-to-date New York, in which she swings between her crummy apartment over a pizzeria, her job answering phones at the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and chic Cobb salads with sleek, successful, obnoxious former classmates.

What I loved most of all, though, was that *Julie & Julia* is that very rare thing, a movie centered on adult women, and that even rarer thing, a movie about women's struggle to express their gifts through work. Not a boyfriend, a fabulous wedding, a baby, a gay best friend, a better marriage, escape from a serial killer, the perfect work-family balance, another baby. Real life is full of women for whom work is at the center, who crave creative challenge, who are miserable until they find a way to make a mark on the world. But in the movies, women with big ambitions tend to be Prada-wearing devils or uptight thirtysomethings who relax when they find a slacker boyfriend or inherit an adorable orphan. Among recent films, *Seraphine*, Martin Provost's biopic about an early-twentieth-century French cleaning woman and self-taught painter, is practically unique in its curiosity about a woman's creative drive. More usually, a woman's cinematic function is to forward, thwart, complicate or decorate the story of a man. As Joseph Gordon-Levitt's elusive girlfriend in *(500) Days of Summer*, Zooey Deschanel has all the external trappings of individuality—aloofness, a sly smile, vintage clothes and indie tastes—but she has no more inner life than Petrarch's Laura. She's there to break the hero's heart and rekindle his ambitions. What will she become? Someone else's wife.

Julia Child taught Americans how to find good food at the supermarket, how to cook, how to eat and how to enjoy. True, she taught the first two items mostly to women of means: her book was directed to "the servantless American cook." As food historian Laura Shapiro observes, Child managed to dislike feminists as well as the suburban "housewife chauffeur" who didn't care how food tasted as long as it was quick and easy to make. In her smart and shrewd memoir, *My Kitchen Wars*, Betty Fussell recalled the wave of competitive cooking that swept through academia in the wake of Julia Child: "Our dinner parties were baroquely elaborated gifts, like the human embroidery of weeping willows and cenotaphs that validated the gentility of Victorian hands." Elaborate cuisine involving many Le Creuset pots and many hours producing the perfect blanquette de veau was the rare area in which wives could express their thwarted need to excel without challenging their husbands' *amour-propre*. Child's recipe for her signature boeuf bourguignon is three pages long and took as much effort and concentration as preparing a lecture—maybe more. But it earned no money and commanded no real respect or reordering of the domestic order; it was basically a hobby for ladies of leisure.

Did the vogue for haute cuisine set off by Child keep middle-class American women in the kitchen longer? This was the 1960s, after all—the women's movement was just around the corner. Even today, with most women employed, cooking, like domesticity in general, is laden with moral implications. It's still women's work—87 percent of meals are prepared by women—and it's still both part of the definition of proper womanhood and a demonstration of love. When domestic standards are raised without a concomitant rise in domestic equality, women tend to end up frazzled, guilty and jealous of one another. The love-hate relationship so many women have with Martha Stewart shows that this dynamic is still with us.

Convenience, to say nothing of health concerns, has long trumped Child's labor-intensive marvels of butter and cream, a fact recently mourned by Michael Pollan in *The New York Times Magazine*. This seems inevitable: Julie Powell came home from a full day's work and still turned out feasts in her tiny kitchen—at 10 o'clock at night. Most people aren't going to do that—even Powell did it mostly to have something to write about. But I'm more sanguine than Pollan about home cooking in general. It need not be difficult or time-consuming—or only a woman's job (ahem!)—to cook a healthy, delicious meal from scratch: catfish baked with olive oil and lemon, pasta with sautéed vegetables, a nice roast chicken with rice pilaf. It isn't duck à l'orange, but it's not rocket science either. Think of it this way: child-rearing standards have been raised so ridiculously high, a woman can spend her whole life socializing one or two small people and still feel like a failure. At least with cooking, chances are if you use fresh ingredients and follow the recipe, dinner will be delicious, and if you drop it on the floor, you can just pile it back on the platter. As Julia used to remind her viewers, in that swooping, thrilling voice of hers, "If you're alone in the kitchen, whoooo is going to see?" ■

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A FORUM

HOW TO GROW DEMOCRACY

"Food democracy" has become the rallying cry of an emerging grassroots movement. It certainly sounds good—but what exactly does it mean? "Eating local," as more and more people strive to do, is part of it. At the most basic level, though, food democracy requires a transformation of the food industry, so that workers and consumers can exercise control over what they produce and eat. As the Small Planet Institute defines it, "Food democracy means the right of all to an essential of life—safe, nutritious food. It also suggests fair access to land to grow food and a fair return for those who labor to produce it. Food democracy concerns itself with the future as well: It implies economic rules that encourage communities to safeguard the soil, water, and wildlife on which all our lives and futures depend." The vision is compelling, but how can it be made concrete? What are the obstacles to democratizing the food system, and how can they be overcome? For this forum, we asked six leading figures of this country's food movement to reflect on how food democracy can be achieved, here and now. Their responses follow.—*The Editors*

DAN BARBER

We need radical thinking, but we don't need a revolution. We don't need an overthrow of capitalism. Nor do we need to become vegetarians. We need not become spartans. We're just going to have to learn how to cook.

It's impossible to overemphasize the importance of good farming for safe and nutritious food. But the campaign for food democracy needs to start with boning knives and cast-iron skillets. A lack of technique behind the stove is, in the end, as complicit in harming human health and the environment as the confinement pig or the corn-fed steer.

Yes, that sixteen-ounce rib-eye takes precious resources like water (approximately 2,500 gallons) and grain (about twelve pounds) away from feeding the poor, and the environmental havoc associated with raising beef most often affects the disenfranchised. By 2050, if we continue this gorging, livestock will be consuming as much as 4 billion people do.

These horrors of conventional animal husbandry are tied to the amount of meat we eat, which is intimately linked to the parts of the animal we choose to eat. That is, choosing the rib-eye—as opposed to choosing, say, the brisket—determines how many animals are produced.

It's the equivalent of eating high on the hog, and it doesn't just mean a lot of wasted meat. It means a lot more animals raised in confinement. How else can farmers afford to increase production when there's increased waste? When suppliers—producers, processors, retailers and, yes, we chefs—throw the bulk of the carcass away, output must go up, leaving farmers little choice but to engage in the mass-production practices that are so morally and environmentally toxic.

Supermarkets in the United States stock cutlets and steaks and loins—restaurant chefs, including me, feature them in seven-ounce portions—but unless you venture to an ethnic market (or dine at an ethnic restaurant), you'll have a hard time

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getting your hands on liver, kidney or tripe. For commerce's sake, it makes more sense to use these odd cuts for dog food, or simply to dump them abroad, in places like Mexico and India. (The only way we've accepted using these less-than-desirables is grinding them up into sausage links and hot dogs—creating dull food products out of disparate and delicious parts.)

Paul Roberts, in his book *The End of Food*, calls this the "protein paradox": meat production has outstripped people production. Through advances in breeding and grain feeding, the cost of one pound of meat is cheaper now than at any time in history. And yet that downswing in cost hasn't led to any kind of meat-eating democracy. If anything, it has enabled—and at this point, even encouraged—a kind of pork chop dictatorship. Not only do we eat too much meat, we also eat too much of the wrong parts. We don't know where our meat comes from, we don't know what the animal we're eating ate, and we sure don't know how to get behind the stove and take control of what we put in our mouths.

We ought to start by looking at the great food cultures of the world. The traditional cuisines of Asia and North Africa, not to mention France and Italy, are based on rice, wheat, spices and smatterings of all cuts of meat. In just about every other cuisine, protein plays second fiddle to grains and vegetables. When meat appears, it does so modestly; it takes up less space on the plate, and more often than not it's a piece of the animal—tripe or oxtail—that Americans so willingly discard.

American cuisine co-opts other cultures' cuisines with the eye of the entitled: special-occasion foods turn into everyday staples, center cuts take center stage. There's nothing inevitable about that, and very little that's delicious. Good cooking gives a voice to these disenfranchised parts. Democratizing the carcass should be the future of food.

Dan Barber is the chef and co-owner of Blue Hill and Blue Hill at Stone Barns. As a board member of the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, he works to bring the principles of good farming directly to the table. Blue Hill and Blue Hill at Stone Barns both received Best New Restaurant nominations from the James Beard Foundation. In 2006, Barber received the James Beard Award for Best Chef: New York City, and in 2009 was named James Beard's Outstanding Chef.

ALICE WATERS

was moved by the way Morgan Spurlock framed a narrow long-distance shot down the corridor of a Beckley, West Virginia, middle school in his outstanding 2004 film, *Super Size Me*. The film is about the toll that fast and processed food takes on all of us. Clearly visible in the background of this particular shot were dozens of students, many of whom were overweight.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that Beckley's cafeteria offers only processed food, which is high in fat, sodium and sugar and of very little nutritional value.

Contrast this with the Central Alternative High School in Appleton, Wisconsin. The school serves troubled youth, but teachers, parents and administrators found a way to turn things around; and when they did, discipline problems dropped sharply. Their secret? Instead of the usual processed meals, the school cafeteria offers fresh, locally grown, low-fat, low-sugar alternatives. The healthier meals are delicious. The students love them. They perform better in class and don't get sick as often.

We are learning that when schools serve healthier meals, they solve serious educational and health-related problems. But what's missing from the national conversation about school lunch reform is the opportunity to use food to teach values that are central to democracy. Better food isn't just about test scores, health and discipline. It is about preparing students for the responsibilities of citizenship.

That's why we need to talk about edible education, not just school lunch reform. Edible education is a radical yet commonsense approach to teaching that integrates classroom instruction, school lunch, cooking and gardening into the studies of math, science, history and reading.

Edible education involves not only teaching children about where food comes from and how it is produced but giving them responsibilities in the school garden and kitchen. Students literally enjoy the fruits of their labor when the food they grow is served in healthy, delicious lunches that they can help prepare.

I learned this firsthand through the Chez Panisse Foundation—the organization I helped create to inspire a network of food activists around the world with edible education programs in their own communities. Here in Berkeley, I see children in our edible education program learn about responsibility, sharing and stewardship and become more connected to themselves and their peers. In the process, they come to embody the most important values of citizenship.

Listen to what one student named Charlotte has to say: "Next we went from the blue corn to the sweet corn and each picked an ear to grill. I must say it tasted really good, even without butter." Or Mati: "I think cleaning up is as important as eating. Cleaning up is sort of fun. And we can't just leave it for the teachers, because we made the mess." Or Jose: "I remember the first time I came to the kitchen. I was afraid to do anything. But then I realized, this is my kitchen. So then I started to enjoy it."

Charlotte, Mati and Jose are learning about so much more than lunch. They're learning that farmers depend on the land; we depend on farmers; and our nation depends on all of us. That cooperation with one another is necessary to nurture the community. And that, by setting the table for one another, we also take care of ourselves. School should be the place where we build democracy, not just by teaching about the Constitution but by becoming connected to our communities and the land in more meaningful ways.

In 1785, Thomas Jefferson declared that "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds."

I believe he was right. The school cafeteria, kitchen and garden, like the town square, can and should be the place where we plant and nourish the values that guide our democracy. We need to join a delicious revolution that can reconnect our children to the table and to what it means to be a steward.

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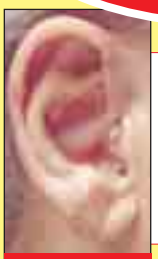

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This is the picture of a caring society, and this is the promise of edible education.

Alice Waters, owner and founder of Chez Panisse Restaurant and Foundation in Berkeley, California, has championed local, organic food for more than thirty-eight years. She is introducing her ideas into public schools through Edible Education, a model garden and kitchen program.

DAVE MURPHY

In the summer of 1776 a small contingent of English colonists articulated a new set of unalienable rights over the archaic theory of divine right of kings, and the American ideals of liberty, freedom and democracy were born. Today, Americans are beginning to express a vision in which the rights that govern our personal and political lives must also extend to something as fundamental as growing the food that nourishes us.

What people are realizing is that, over the past sixty years, the ownership of our food supply has been consolidated into the hands of a few powerful multinational corporations. More and more Americans are finding that the abundance of "cheap" food comes at a high cost to our society, our individual rights and our collective future. As writers from Wendell Berry to Michael Pollan have eloquently argued, the industrialization of food in America has had fundamental health, environmental and economic consequences that can no longer be ignored.

By placing a high value on "cheap" food, Americans have unwittingly allowed corporate agribusiness to outsource the true cost of production onto society. The result has been the pollution of our nation's rivers and streams, damage to our citizens' health and a severe breakdown in our nation's rural communities, where small farmers have been pushed off the land.

While it needs to be remembered that farming, and food production, is a business and a matter of economics, it is also something much more than that—and as the 1940 *Yearbook of Agriculture* noted, "Our economic problems are really moral problems." The truth is, food production has been a moral question since the founding of our nation, and even before, when our ancestors first ventured here, carving out a place for us by conquering America's native inhabitants and then enslaving the inhabitants of another continent. Sadly, horrifying abuses can be found in this country today: for example, in the Pigford lawsuit against the Department of Agriculture, which showed rampant discrimination against African-American farmers by the USDA; among the Immokalee workers in the tomato fields of Florida; and in the bunkhouse of mentally disabled men who were discovered living and working in squalor for a turkey processor in Iowa this past winter.

At the same time, a new breed of eater is awakening to the fact that food is not just something of convenience, a balancing of flavor and calories and macronutrients, but part of a larger conversation about how our nation's democracy functions. For this generation, the idea that we can have a positive impact on the environment, a farmer's life, rural communities and the welfare of animals by what we choose to eat is only the beginning. Increasingly, Americans want to know where the food they eat comes from, how it was grown and who grew it, because they are beginning to understand the connection between our stomachs and our common destiny.

In an effort to reclaim our right of self-determination, America's citizens are creating vibrant food democracies by buying food that is organic, sustainable, humane and fairly produced; planting gardens on rooftops and in abandoned lots in urban centers; signing up for community-supported agriculture (CSAs); writing letters to members of Congress demanding that the basic rights that have been enshrined in our Constitution extend to something as fundamental as food.

As we have learned in recent years, freedom in a democracy is only one election or legislative vote away from being extinguished. If we hope to build a sustainable food system for the twenty-first century, now is our time to act. We must be bold. We must be united. Food Democracy Now!

Dave Murphy, the founder of Food Democracy Now!, is a sixth-generation Iowan and an advocate for sustainable agriculture. Founded after the election of President Obama, Food Democracy Now! is a community of more than 100,000 members that works to create a more sustainable future for family farmers, rural communities and American consumers.

GRACE LEE BOGGS

Detroit's local foods movement has been a catalyst in the [r]evolution that is rebirthing Detroit as a City of Hope. The city's early devastation by deindustrialization provided us with the space and place to begin anew. It also challenged us to make a paradigm shift in our thinking about social justice.

Our [r]evolution began in the 1980s with African-American elders. Raised in the South, these "Gardening Angels" could see Detroit's vacant lots not as blight but as opportunities to grow our own food and also help urban youth understand the importance of self-reliance.

In 1988, Coleman Young, Detroit's first black mayor, unwittingly accelerated the process. Stuck in the old social democratic paradigm, in which government stimulus programs or a "New Deal" are seen as the only methods of reviving communities, he proposed a casino industry to create 50,000 jobs to reduce the crime that had made Detroit the world's "murder capital." When we organized Detroiters Uniting to defeat him, he challenged us to come up with an alternative.

In response, we founded Detroit Summer, a multicultural/intergenerational youth program/movement to rebuild, redefine and respirit Detroit from the ground up. Detroit Summer involved young people with elders in planting community gardens and with community residents in painting public murals. This reconnection with earth and community unleashed their imaginations to create their own bike programs for transportation and poetry workshops to express their new thoughts.

Detroit Summer also triggered the Detroit Agricultural Network. Today DAN includes more than 700 community gardens, lovingly cultivated by Detroiters of all ages, walks of life and ethnicities who share information on resources and how to preserve and market produce at quarterly potlucks and cluster centers.

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Slowly but surely, this [r]evolution is transforming Detroit and Detroiters. It reduces neighborhood blight, reconnects children and adults, and provides a community base for economic development. It also helps us redefine education in a city whose schools have become pipelines to prison because they still adhere to the top-down factory model created a hundred years ago in the heyday of industrialization.

For example, at Romanowski Park in southwest Detroit, public schools collaborate with groups such as Greening of Detroit, MSU Extension, Capuchin Soup Kitchen, and American Indian Health and Family Services on a minifarm/garden project that provides increased access to fresh produce and educates youth and the local community in sustainable agricultural practices.

On the near west side, a two-acre farm is operated by Malik Yakini, who chairs the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. The network seeks to empower the black majority in Detroit, who are mainly food consumers rather than producers and distributors.

Earthworks, on the east side not far from the Boggs Center, was founded by Capuchin monks to supply produce for their soup kitchen, where the poor, homeless, ex-prisoners and addicted come for a hot meal. Now it is also a community-building program that strives to develop the self-reliance and citizenship of soup kitchen regulars by engaging them in activities that improve the ability of all community residents to obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet.

Every August DAN conducts a garden tour. After one tour, an urban planner friend described the local foods movement as the "Quiet Revolution, a revolution for self-determination taking place quietly in Detroit. "

To become part of this [r]evolution, come to the second US Social Forum in Detroit, June 22–26, 2010, and help build greenhouses.

Grace Lee Boggs, 94, has lived in Detroit since 1953, most of that time in the same house. Over the past seventy years, she has been a part of almost every major movement in the United States. She writes a weekly column for the Michigan Citizen.

LaDONNA REDMOND

There are many Americans who have the resources to buy healthy food and still are denied access to it. This denial of access has created "food deserts," a term I despise but use for the sake of argument. The trouble with the term "food deserts" is that it describes lack in a way that indicates that the solution is outside of the community labeled a desert.

To change our food system, we need to change the way we talk about it.

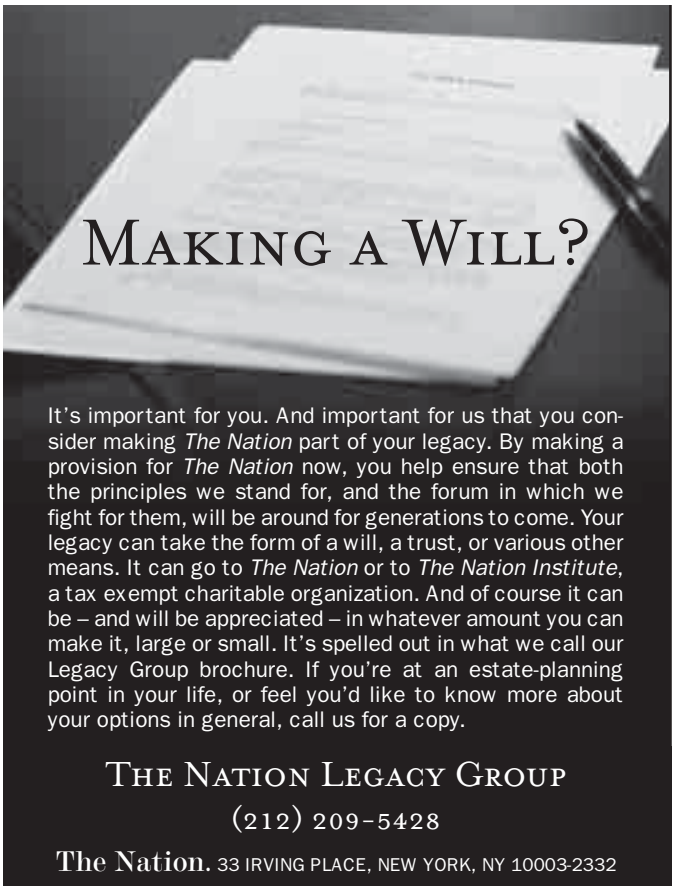
There is a pervasive idea in the sustainable-food movement that simply returning to a food system of the past would right all that is wrong in the food world. However, history does not show that there has ever been a time when our food system was fair or just. Reflecting through my eyes, the eyes of an African-American woman, I see a system that from the earliest days of the founding of America was built on the annihilation of Native Americans and enslavement of Africans.

There is room to expand the conversation about food to engage all Americans. Recently, the right to food has been inserted into the healthcare debate. Rightly so, since access to healthy foods is a missing component of the healthcare dialogue. For too long our debates about food and healthcare have been traveling along separate paths, even though science has long proven that diet is a major contributor to chronic diseases.

Food is also intimately tied to ideas of freedom and choice. Too often, the concept of choice is invoked in the dominant culture when it is related to all the things that destroy the moral fiber of communities. But when communities of color invoke choice, we are talking about freedom. In order to access the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness promised by the Declaration of Independence, one must be free.

I am often called a food-justice activist. However, I tend to look at myself as a freedom fighter. I believe that all communities should have access not just to food outcomes but to the production and distribution methods by which they get food. In other words, I don't just want access to the food in the store; I want access to the land that grows food so that I may grow my own. I want access to vacant land in urban communities to not only grow food but to grow soil. Fertile soil is the cornerstone of a vibrant community, urban or rural. ■

LaDonna Redmond, a food-justice activist in Chicago, is co-founder and president of Graffiti and Grub, a grocery store for the hip-hop generation.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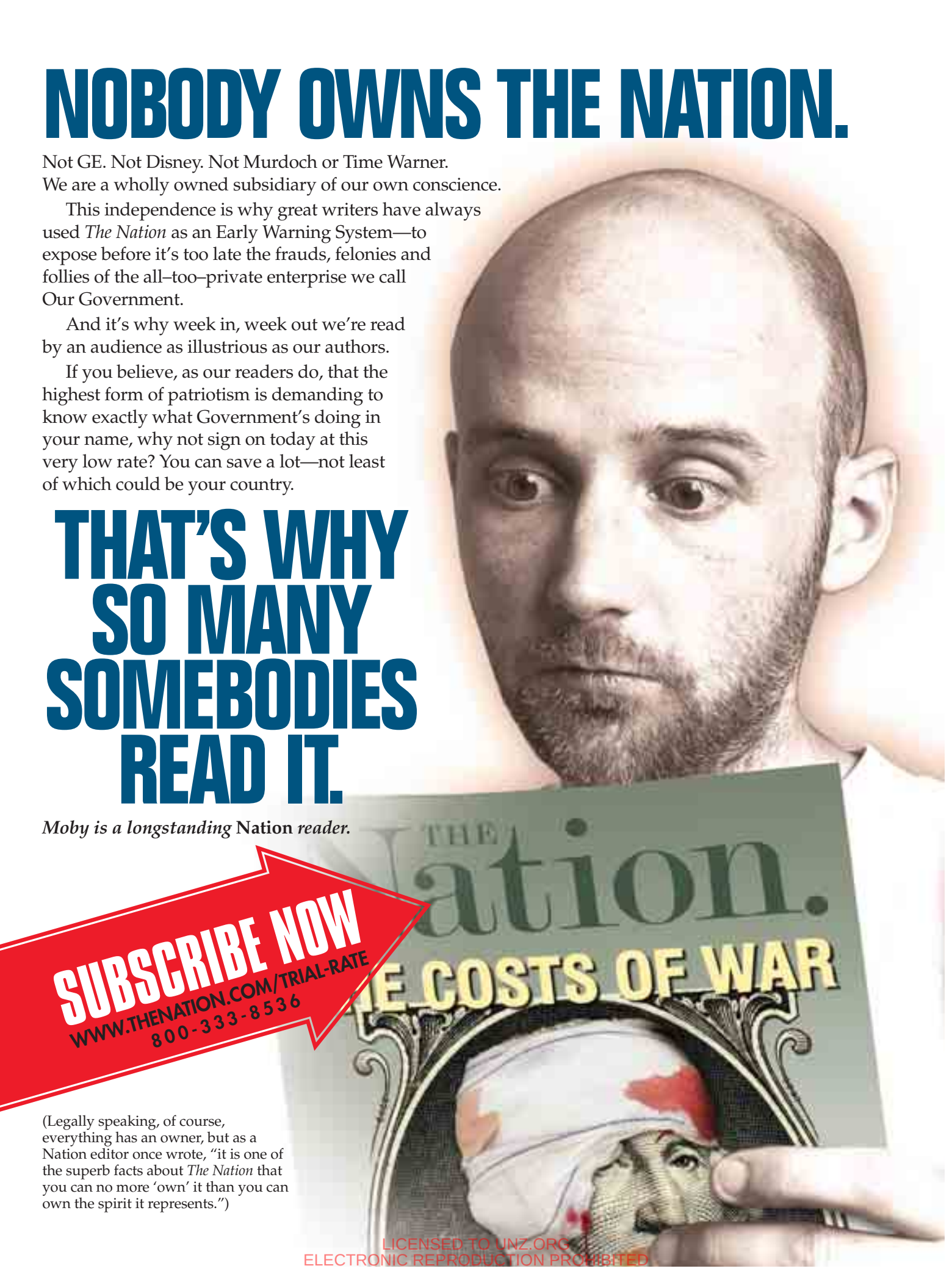

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Ending Africa's Hunger

Bill Gates's fortune is funding a new Green Revolution. But is that what Africans need?

by RAJ PATEL, ERIC HOLT-GIMENEZ AND ANNIE SHATTUCK

More than a billion people eat fewer than 1,900 calories per day. The majority of them work in agriculture, about 60 percent are women or girls, and most are in rural Africa and Asia. Ending their hunger is one of the few unimpeachably noble tasks left to humanity, and we live in a rare time when there is the knowledge and political will to do so. The question is, how? Conventional wisdom suggests that if people are hungry, there must be a shortage of food, and all we need do is figure out how to grow more.

This logic turns hunger into a symptom of a technological deficit, telling a story in which a little agricultural know-how can feed the world. It's a seductive view, and one that appears to underwrite President Obama's vision for ending hunger. In an interview with an African news agency, he shared his frustration over "the fact that the Green Revolution that we introduced into India in the '60s, we haven't yet introduced into Africa in 2009. In some countries, you've got declining agricultural productivity. That makes absolutely no sense."

In a squat beige Seattle office building, the world's largest philanthropic organization has been thinking along the same lines as the president. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, with an endowment of more than $30 billion, has embarked on a multibillion-dollar effort to transform African agriculture. It helped to set up the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) in 2006, and since then has spent $1.3 billion on agricultural development grants, largely in Africa. With such resources, solving African hunger could be Gates's greatest legacy.

But there's a problem: the conventional wisdom is wrong. Food output per person is as high as it has ever been, suggesting that hunger isn't a problem of production so much as one of distribution. It's true that African soil fertility is poor, though, which might explain why President Obama feels that the continent needs a Green Revolution.

At best, however, the first Green Revolution was an ambiguous success. As John Perkins writes in his magisterial *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution*, it was instigated by the US government not out of a direct concern for the well-being of the world's hungry but from a worry that a hungry urban poor might take to the streets and demand left-wing changes in the Global South. The term "Green Revolution" was coined by William Gaud, administrator of USAID in the late 1960s. Referring to record yields in Pakistan, India, the Philippines and Turkey, he announced, "Developments in the field

of agriculture contain the makings of a new revolution. It is not a violent Red Revolution like that of the Soviets, nor is it a White Revolution like that of the shah of Iran. I call it the Green Revolution." Steeped in the cold war, the first Green Revolution was designed to prevent any other revolutions from happening.

The Green Revolution appeared successful because the global quantity of food produced increased dramatically. From 1970 to 1990 the amount of food available per person rose by 11 percent, and more than 150 million people were lifted from the ranks of the world's hungry. But most of that rise was driven by transformations inside China. Subtract China from the picture and the heyday of the Green Revolution saw global hunger increase by 11 percent. In South America, hunger grew by nearly 20 percent despite impressive gains in output driven, in part, by improved crop varieties. Those varieties required large landholdings in order to be economically efficient, which meant that the peasants working that land had to be kicked off. Those displaced peasants migrated to the hillsides and tropical forests, doubling the area of cultivated land—in other words, the increase in food came not only through technology but also simply by having food growing on a greater area.

Beyond the massive displacement of peasants, the Green Revolution wrought other social damage—urban slums sprawled around cities to house displaced workers, pesticide use went up, groundwater levels fell and industrial agricultural practices began racking up significant environmental debt. Today, because of the Green Revolution's catastrophic economic and

Raj Patel, Eric Holt-Gimenez and Annie Shattuck are a fellow, executive director and policy analyst, respectively, at Food First and have recently written Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice *(Food First Books, foodfirst.org).*

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ecological consequences, even its strong advocates in India have recommended that up to 70 percent of farmers farm organically.

The architects of Africa's new Green Revolution at the Gates Foundation are sensitive to these flaws. In an interview, Roy Steiner, deputy director of agricultural development, was well versed in the history, emphasizing that the Gates Foundation's agricultural priorities are directed at small farmers (known as "smallholders") and women. The past offered some salutary lessons, he said, because "if you look at the depletion of water tables and the overuse of fertilizer, a lot of that has to do with very poor policy choices. It pushed a certain mode of agriculture that we know now was an overuse."

Nonetheless, the Green Revolution being prepared for Africa bears more than a passing resemblance to its predecessor. For starters, in the 1960s the push for a Green Revolution was accompanied by fears about national security and stability; the recent global spate of food rebellions, in dozens of countries from Egypt to Haiti to India, has made food a security concern once again. Furthermore, the first Green Revolution was made possible through the philanthropy of a billionaire American family—the Rockefellers; the second is bankrolled by Gates. This is not a superficial coincidence: the destinies of millions of the world's poorest farmers are again being shaped by the richest Americans, and philanthropic choices are very different from democratic ones.

Gates's reliance on technology to address a political and social problem echoes the flawed approach of the first Green Revolution.

One of the most important choices involves the role of technology. At the Gates Foundation, Roy Steiner emphasized that "we believe in the power of technology." It's a belief with clout: about a third of the foundation's $1.3 billion in agricultural development grants have been invested in science and technology, with almost 30 percent of the 2008 grants promoting and developing seed biotechnologies. Through a range of investments, the Gates Foundation is turning its faith into reality. This reliance on technology to address a growing political and social problem loudly echoes the thinking behind the first Green Revolution.

Why Africa Is Hungry and Knowledge Is Never Neutral

Some of the changes made possible by Gates's funding are welcome. An African Centre for Crop Improvement has been set up at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, which is designed to change the way African agricultural scientists work. Rather than carting them off to Europe or North America, where they learn about the pressing agricultural issues facing French or American farmers, the new center encourages African scientists to face African challenges while based in Africa. Other Gates investments are geared toward training more women PhDs and providing an infrastructure to source food aid locally.

These are valuable efforts, but one might pause to ask why the need for such philanthropic intervention arose in the first place. The faltering quality of African agricultural research institutions, and the decline in government spending on agriculture, is a result of the budget austerity imposed by international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, in the 1980s and '90s. As Filipino scholar-activist Walden Bello has noted, Africa exported 1.3 million tons of food a year in the 1960s, but after being subject to international development loans and free-market fundamentalism, today it *imports* nearly 25 percent of its food. In a 2008 report, the Bank's internal evaluations group lambasted the policies that led to this situation. What the Gates Foundation is doing is using its private money to fund activities that once were in the public domain and were, albeit imperfectly, under democratic control.

The preference for private sector contributions to agriculture shapes the Gates Foundation's funding priorities. In a number of grants, for instance, one corporation appears repeatedly—Monsanto. To some extent, this simply reflects Monsanto's domination of industrial agricultural research. There are, however, notable synergies between Gates and Monsanto: both are corporate titans that have made millions through technology, in particular through the aggressive defense of proprietary intellectual property. Both organizations are suffused by a culture of expertise, and there's some overlap between them. Robert Horsch, a former senior vice president at Monsanto, is, for instance, now interim director of Gates's agricultural development program and head of the science and technology team. Travis English and Paige Miller, researchers with the Seattle-based Community Alliance for Global Justice, have uncovered some striking trends in Gates Foundation funding. By following the money, English told us that "AGRA used funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to write twenty-three grants for projects in Kenya. Twelve of those recipients are involved in research in genetically modified agriculture, development or advocacy. About 79 percent of funding in Kenya involves biotech in one way or another." And, English says, "so far, we have found over $100 million in grants to organizations connected to Monsanto."

This isn't surprising in light of the fact that Monsanto and Gates both embrace a model of agriculture that sees farmers suffering a deficit of knowledge—in which seeds, like little tiny beads of software, can be programmed to transmit that knowledge for commercial purposes. This assumes that Green Revolution technologies—including those that substitute for farmers' knowledge—are not only desirable but neutral. Knowledge is never neutral, however: it inevitably carries and influences relations of power.

The first Green Revolution spawned and exacerbated many social divisions, especially around access to land and resources, since the scale required by Green Revolution technologies meant that it was systematically biased against smallholders. The Gates Foundation is clearly aware of the importance of smallholder agriculture; but a leaked internal strategy docu-

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Money, Morals, Immortality—What Do We Value?

Decide for Yourself with a Fascinating Professor's 24 Lectures about Choices, Chances, Rules, and Free Will

Our lives are filled with everyday questions of fact and finance. Which investment brings the highest return? What school district is the house in? What will this candidate actually do if elected? But the really fundamental questions of our lives, says Professor Patrick Grim, are questions of neither fact nor finance. The really fundamental questions are questions of value. These are the deep questions that apply to every aspect of our lives.

What is it that gives something genuine value? What things are really worth striving for? What is it that makes life worth living? Are there values that transcend cultural differences? Can we have ethical values without religion? If the universe operates in terms of deterministic laws, how can there be real choice? Is all value subjective? We can even ask if life is always worth living, or whether in some situations we would be better off dead.

Questions of Value is a course for anyone who has ever felt the tug of such questions or who wants to fine-tune their ability to see how deeper questions of ethics and values apply to the choices that make up their lives.

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What values, for instance, are involved in thinking about life and death? What values are evident in a yearning for immortality? The lines of discussion raised throughout the course are regularly as provocative as these, and Professor Grim means them to be exactly that.

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About Your Professor

Dr. Patrick Grim is a Distinguished Teaching Professor of Philosophy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. While a Fulbright Fellow at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, he earned his B.Phil. He received his Ph.D. from Boston University. He is the author of *The Incomplete Universe: Totality, Knowledge, and Truth* and the founding coeditor of more than 20 volumes of *The Philosopher's Annual*. He has been awarded the President and Chancellor's awards for excellence in teaching and has been elected to the Academy of Teachers and Scholars.

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ment suggests that something else is more important: "Over time, this [strategy] will require some degree of land mobility and a lower percentage of total employment involved in direct agricultural production." "Land mobility" is an Orwellian term meaning the land stays where it is but the people on it are driven off. The foundation stands behind this idea, saying that peasants will head to cities "because there are a lot of them who don't want to be farmers [and] people make their own choices."

This idea of choice is an integral part of the conventional wisdom about agriculture in Africa. At least until the financial crisis, it was true that young men tended not to want to remain in agriculture if they could avoid it; but that choice was conditioned, in part, by policies that underinvested in rural areas compared with urban ones. One of the consequences of the financial crisis has been to change that field of choices. For the first time in years, men who had migrated to the cities find there's less opportunity in urban than in rural areas.

They're returning to family land that has been farmed by women, who have developed rich knowledge about agriculture. The technologies that the Gates Foundation funds, like hybrid seed and synthetic fertilizer, require much less know-how than some of the diverse traditional systems managed by women. In many African cultures, women grow the majority of food, but men control access to cash. Rather than supporting and building on women's agricultural knowledge systems, cash-based agricultural technology allows men with the economic wherewithal to displace women as farmers.

Ecological farming systems based on farmers' knowledge not only raise yields but reduce costs, using less water and fewer chemicals.

African farmers' organizations have repeatedly rejected this high-tech approach to agriculture and instead are making their own choices. Since AGRA announced its plans in 2006, groups representing the largest farmer federations in Africa have come together in a series of meetings to organize support for African agroecological solutions to the food crisis.

Despite institutional neglect, ecological farming systems have been sprouting up across the African continent for decades—systems based on farmers' knowledge, which not only raise yields but reduce costs, are diverse and use less water and fewer chemicals. Fifteen years ago, researchers and farmers in Kenya began developing a method for beating striga, a parasitic weed that causes significant crop loss for African farmers. The system they developed, the "push-pull system," also builds soil fertility, provides animal fodder and resists another major African pest, the stemborer. Under the system, predators are "pushed" away from corn because it is planted alongside insect-repellent crops, while they are "pulled" toward crops like Napier grass, which exudes a gum that traps and kills pests and is also an important fodder crop for livestock. Push-pull has spread to more than 10,000 households in East Africa by means of town meetings, national radio broadcasts and farmer field schools. It's a farming system that's much more robust, cheaper, less environmentally harmful, locally developed, locally owned and one among dozens of promising agroecological alternatives on the ground in Africa today.

It was innovative ecological technologies like push-pull (and not traditional Green Revolution approaches) that were praised by a recent international effort to assess the future of agriculture. "The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development" (IAASTD), a report modeled after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, took more than four years to complete and relied on the expertise of more than 400 scientists. It was adopted by fifty-eight countries in the global North and South (though not the United States, Canada or Australia). The IAASTD found that a focus on small-scale sustainable agriculture, locally adapted seed and ecological farming better address the complexities of climate change, hunger, poverty and productive demands on agriculture in the developing world. That report—the most comprehensive scientific assessment of world agriculture to date—recommended development strategies that are in large part the opposite of those backed by the Gates Foundation.

The Gates Foundation acknowledges the relevance of the IAASTD's insights. But it continues to invest heavily in biotech solutions to the problem of hunger and gives short shrift to the agroecological approaches recommended by the report. What's more, there's empirical reason to doubt whether biotech can deliver what Gates is hoping for. Genetically modified (GM) seeds are expensive, proprietary and contribute to the corporate monopolization of the world's seed supply. Despite extraordinary restrictions on research into the effects of GM products—the industry refuses to allow independent researchers to study patented seed—evidence is finally emerging of the significant environmental and health risks they pose, prompting the American Academy of Environmental Medicine earlier this year to call for an immediate moratorium on GM food.

Prestigious research organizations like the Union of Concerned Scientists have demonstrated that GM crops (which are legal for commercial use in only three African countries) do not increase intrinsic yields, and, in the developing world especially, can increase costs and risks to smallholders, with mixed, often negative effects on their incomes. Although the Gates Foundation has promised crops genetically engineered for drought tolerance, these crops have yet to outperform traditional varieties, according to an assessment by the Australian government. The foundation has also spent more than $111 million to "biofortify" (genetically engineer) crops to have a higher vitamin content, despite past technical and cultural failures that indicate a diverse diet goes much further than genetically engineered supplements in supporting good nutrition.

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Africa's New Poster Child: The Malawi 'Miracle'

One place where the new Green Revolution has gotten a head start is the small East African nation of Malawi. After a severe drought in 2003, more than a third of the country needed food aid to survive. Bucking advice from the World Bank, the country began giving out vouchers on a large scale for subsidized fertilizer in 2005. The rains returned, yields rose, Malawi began exporting grain and the international community declared the hunger crisis over.

The Gates Foundation has been aggressively supporting the funding of fertilizer in Africa through grants to establish a network of private agro-input dealers. While the program doesn't explicitly subsidize the price of fertilizers to farmers, it encourages national policies to increase fertilizer availability. If the problem for African farmers is soil fertility, funding fertilizer seems unimpeachable. A closer examination of the data raises some troubling questions, though. It isn't clear whether it was the fertilizer or the rain that caused yields to increase. Worse yet, according to sources in Malawi, hunger has not abated at anywhere near the levels believed by the international development community.

Indeed, there's reason to think that fertilizer subsidies may render societies more vulnerable to famine. Roland Bunch, a former agronomist at World Neighbors and author of *Two Ears of Corn*, a handbook on people-centered agricultural development, explains the problem. "The indirect effects of subsidized fertilizer are that farmers stop amending their soils with organic matter because it is easier to apply fertilizer. When the subsidies dry up—as they invariably do—farmers are left with soils that are so inert that they can't even grow a good green manure to restore fertility. At that point, with neither chemical fertilizer nor green manures being feasible, we could easily witness a famine across Africa like nothing we have ever seen before."

This is a concern echoed on the ground. Rachel Bezner Kerr, a professor at the University of Western Ontario, has been working in Malawi for more than a decade. She says that Malawi's fertilizer subsidies are "masking food security problems for the long term." Bezner Kerr works with a project in Malawi that takes a different approach to soil health by relying on local farmer experimenters. One village headman has, for instance, encouraged his village to adopt ecological agriculture, which not only improves yields but produces a diverse diet that has improved the health of the community's children, at a fraction of the cost of Gates's genetically engineered nutrition projects. Much like push-pull, the result of that project, which spread to more than 7,000 households, is that families—and the soil—are better off.

When asked about how AGRA affects projects like hers, Bezner Kerr says, "When farmers get vouchers [for fertilizer], they wonder, Why incorporate crop residues? If AGRA is putting all that money into fertilizer, it is taking away from efforts like ours." Like Bunch, she's concerned about the economic as well as the environmental sustainability of fertilizer giveaways. "What happens when AGRA leaves?" she asks.

"JAW-DROPPING
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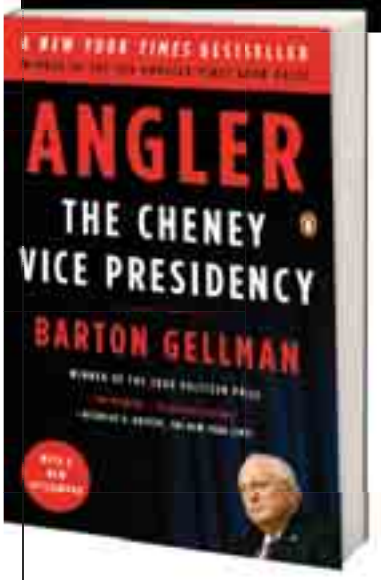
—NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*



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Is Bill Gates Africa's Latest Strongman?

The Gates Foundation responds to criticism of its funding decisions by saying that it is learning all the time, with a state-of-the-art system that will soon let the project officers seek feedback through the cellphones of more than 10,000 farmer stakeholders. It's unusual in the world of foundations to have such a strong commitment to correcting mistakes. In its flexibility and openness to reform, the Gates Foundation seems ready to depart from the trajectory of the first Green Revolution.

Stung by widespread criticism over its Green Revolution approach, AGRA representatives have begun participating in public consultations with NGOs and African farm leaders. While this dialogue is an important step, the farm leaders are unhappy about being consulted so late in the game. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, recently convened a dialogue on AGRA. There, Simon Mwamba of the Eastern and Southern Africa Small-Scale Farmers' Forum expressed this frustration in no-nonsense terms: "You come. You buy the land. You make a plan. You build a house. Now you ask me, what color do I want to paint the kitchen? This is not participation!"

Nnimmo Bassey, director of Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria, suggests, "If the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations wish to extend the hand of fellowship to the African continent, they should move away from strategies that favor monoculture, lead to land grabs and tie local farmers to the shop doors of biotech seed monopolies." This is feedback that can't so easily be shot back to base through a cellphone.

The calls from African organizations to be able to set the agenda for their own agricultural development are heard only faintly in the United States. That's largely because when it comes to African hunger, prejudices about the incompetence of African farmers and the marvels of biotechnology do a lot of the thinking for us. But the Gates Foundation isn't a victim of poor reasoning. It actively promotes an agenda that supports some of the most powerful corporations on earth. Far more than the peer-reviewed IAASTD study, Gates's strategy reflects another report, funded by the foundation itself: "Renewing American Leadership in the Fight Against Global Hunger and Poverty" from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Knocked out in a couple of months by a small team led by a Gates Foundation senior fellow and stacked with staff from institutions receiving substantial Gates money, the report, while rightly calling for renewed investment and education, again ignores the structural and political causes of Africa's hunger, ascribing it to a technical deficit. The report concludes that the United States needs to "reassert its leadership" in "spreading new technologies," because it will increase trade and "strengthen American institutions." Worse, the council's solutions—with classic Green Revolution hubris—ignore the successful endogenous solutions that have been spreading across the continent for three decades.

Rarely in the history of philanthropy has one foundation—or more correctly, one man—had this kind of power. When Obama made his remarks on the Green Revolution, one *Seattle Times* journalist suggested that "President Obama and other world leaders seem to be taking their cue from the Gates Foundation." It's not hard to see the paths through which the thinking in Seattle might have made it to Washington, DC. Many AGRA and Gates Foundation employees are former industry and government insiders. Rajiv Shah, a doctor with no previous agricultural experience who was headhunted by the Gates Foundation, is now at the Department of Agriculture, as under secretary for research, education and economics, and also chief scientist.

The foundation's reach extends far beyond Washington. With billions committed to agricultural development, the Gates Foundation has a financial heft equal to that of a government in the global North. In 2007 the United States contributed $60 million to the system of international public agricultural research centers. Gates has pumped $122 million into the system in the past eighteen months alone and given a total of $317 million to the World Bank.

Africa's Green Revolution has another similarity with the first Green Revolution: the technological preferences of the philanthropist shape the approaches on the ground. For the Rockefellers, that meant agricultural technology based on industrial chemistry and oil. For Gates, it's about proprietary intellectual property. Africa's Green Revolution is, in other words, just a new way of doing business as usual.

In its push for technological solutions, its distaste for redistributive social policy and disregard for extant alternatives—as well as in the circumstances that have made food an international security concern—this Green Revolution looks very similar to its predecessor. The biggest issue, however, isn't one of commission but of omission. Just as in India, where peasant demands for land reform in the 1960s that might have led to more sustainable and durable progress (as such reforms did in China, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea) were ignored, African farmers advocating their own solutions to the food crisis are being marginalized. In particular, the vocally articulated demands—for agroecological alternatives, state support for farmer-led research, for land reform, for women's rights in agriculture, and for sharing access to water—all fade into the background when Gates's answers are amplified.

It will take a suite of policies, addressing both the technical and sociopolitical reasons for hunger in Africa, to make lasting change. Technologies for development need to be accompanied by other, political reforms, including canceling debt, removing food and agriculture from the World Trade Organization, investing heavily in farmers' organizations and their proven sustainable agricultural technologies, and supporting the peer-reviewed approaches generated by the science of agroecology.

Models for this kind of change already exist. In Mali, peasant movements have successfully persuaded the government to adopt as a national priority the idea of "food sovereignty," a shorthand for the democratization of the food system. Similar efforts are happening at regional and local levels in other countries. But for those initiatives to register in the United States, the conventional wisdom regarding the Green Revolution needs to be replaced. The tragedy here is not that Africa hasn't had a Green Revolution but that the mistakes of the first may be repeated once more, and that one foundation has the power to make the rest of the world bend to its misguided agenda. ■

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Green Shoots in New Orleans

A frustrating quest for food security has led some residents to grow their own.

by DAYO OLOPADE

"Margarine, margarine, 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter.'" Poppy Tooker recalls the months of food shortages after Hurricane Katrina ripped the Gulf Coast apart. "I could not believe there was no butter." According to the New Orleans native, one unfortunate but little-noticed repercussion of the storm was the demise of dairy. As a food activist, she understood the heavily industrial process of butter churning, preservation, shipping and storage. But in light of her city's rich culinary history—fresh collards, crawfish étouffées and endless okra—the dearth was particularly jarring. After "a concentrated three-day search," Tooker found her grail—in Baton Rouge, more than an hour's drive out of the ruined city.

From August 2005 until, well, now, thousands of city residents have been living what Pamela Broom, a food-justice advocate also born and raised in New Orleans, calls "the frontier life." Richard McCarthy, who reopened one of his farmers' markets just ten weeks after Katrina, recalls the shortages with a grim look. Privileged shoppers trucked to nearby Jefferson Parish for essentials, but "there just wasn't enough anything," he says. Early returnees picked through food bins alongside National Guardsmen with automatic weaponry. Volunteers plastered trees with FOOD WANTED posters, sharing news of a Wendy's open until 5 o'clock, or an aluminum buffet at noon, courtesy of the Salvation Army. And as the city dried in the sun, the food chain began to reconstitute. "One woman started to make food on Fridays," says Broom. "Just one thing—red beans or whatever—and the people started to come."

Federal failures forced this ethic of self-reliance onto the city. Today, however, the question of where to find fresh food is no longer whispered along a community grapevine. More often than not, the answer is blooming in plain sight, from a bed in one of dozens of neighborhood gardens and microfarms that dot the blighted cityscape. These victory gardens for the twenty-first century produce no butter but rather fruits and vegetables that may yet change the future of American agriculture.

Helping to lead the urban farming effort is the New Orleans Food and Farm Network, established in 2002 as a means of coordinating the fledgling group of regional farmers and urban growers who were sending green shoots into a city already plagued by food and economic insecurity before Katrina struck. The summer after the hurricane, NOFFN rallied its membership to create a series of "food maps," tips for the real-life scavenger hunt that Gulf Coast residents undertook

to stave off hunger. Today the nonprofit is still "kind of like the doctor on call," says Daphne Derven, executive director (Broom is deputy director). Dozens of nascent and existing New Orleans growing operations look to their policy and technical expertise for guidance on how to eat and what to grow: "We are always focused on food access—whether that's how to cook and eat nutritiously, or whether that's how to grow your own food," Derven says.

But from a land use and agricultural policy perspective, the Big Easy is still the Wild West. Tooling around the wards of New Orleans with Broom and Derven is an exercise in blinking and missing: was that shock of green we just passed a vacant, weedy lot or a young garden staked with tomatoes and sunflowers?

For now, the answer is a tossup. In addition to the occasional microfarm, New Orleans is still laced with tiny bodegas and corner stores—Eat Well Food Mart, Circle Food Mart, Piety Supermarket—selling the fatty po' boys and sugary packaged goods that crept into the local diet long before Katrina. The unhealthy snacks supplement the food at medium-sized retail outlets like Family Dollar and Save-a-Lot, sold at or beyond shelf life. And after the storm, even the discount chains shuttered locations along the city's main thoroughfares. Big food stores were no different: the Winn-Dixie supermarket chain let a handful of locations lie fallow until early this year; the A&P sold its interests in 2007 and has yet to return. The local Wal-Mart

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temporarily abandoned its bulk sales model, functioning instead as a basic grocery store. In the hardest-hit, mostly black Lower Ninth Ward, residents walk or drive for miles to eat from what Broom calls, with a wry smile, "your typical rip-off-the-neighborhood corner store."

Of course, the preponderance of "food deserts" in a city with centuries of agricultural history is deeply ironic. What's more, the issue of food insecurity is intimately bound up with race, class and negative health outcomes. Looking at similar dynamics in Dallas, the author of a recent study in the *International Journal of Behavioural and Healthcare Research* wrote, "the typical no-grocery-store neighborhood has half the white residents, twice the black residents, roughly the same number of Hispanic residents, $20,000 less in median annual income and twice the number of HHS clients." The consequences of this inequity are painfully evident in New Orleans today. In 2004 the state spent $1.3 billion on medical costs related to obesity. Nearly 60 percent of majority-black Orleans Parish residents reported having to drive more than three miles to a food source. One in five households, however, didn't have access to a car.

"It is hard to imagine hunger and obesity existing within the same family, or even within the same person," says Ashley Graham, Louisiana director of Share Our Strength, a food advocacy group. But such is the case in New Orleans, one of the poorest and least healthy cities in America even before the flood that left 80 percent of it underwater. Before the hurricane, cheap food was bad food. Afterward, it became difficult to find any food at all. Katrina's infrastructure collapse is an example of the kind of food insecurity that may grow more frequent during this century as a result of economic, natural or biological disasters. But it's inspiring that urban agriculturalists have turned uncertainty into opportunity. The roots of a real homestead farming revolution are now stronger in New Orleans than in perhaps any other city in America.

The gardens were a response to the post-hurricane lack of food access, distinguishing the city from other sites of food-justice organizing.

The banana and palm trees that ramble over vacant lots in New Orleans will not let you forget the city's growing power. The peak farming season is a long, lush sigh, from late fall through spring and into the first half of summer. The subtropical climate nurtures traditional American vegetables and fruits, from tomatoes, squash, corn and beans (which almost everyone is growing) to blueberries (which almost everyone loves). The Latino Farmers Cooperative in Central City cultivates the flavor palate of South and Central America, drying huge bunches of cilantro into coriander in the bayou sun.

Little Sparrow Farm, run by Marilyn Yank, a co-founder and program director at NOFFN, grows peanuts and dinosaur kale. And in one backyard garden, atop the ugliness of a formerly "blighted and adjudicated" property, a woman named Jeanette Bell tends avocados, black pepper, sugar cane and mangoes. Among the fireworks of lavender and tarragon spraying the concrete below, I even spy a pineapple.

The incredible diversity of output speaks to the concerted efforts of many committed food activists and talented growers like Bell and Yank. But the high volume of microgrowing is also due in part to the opportunity couched in the trauma of 2005. "When Katrina hit, it really shook things up pretty dramatically," says Scott Miller, a manager at Rouses, the only local supermarket to expand its footprint after the storm. "Variety was off, selection was off, the distance traveled was off." Yet the rebuilding process has engaged green thumbs across the city. "For us, the aftermath of Katrina, coupled with the global economic distress and our place within that, has allowed us to be able to work on permitting and ordinances, the training part, the green jobs part," says Broom. "You're starting fresh."

Paul Baricos is testing the new paradigm of food growing and sourcing deep within, in Hollygrove, the working-class neighborhood that rapper Lil Wayne calls home. The year-old Hollygrove Market and Farm, based on the successful model of Growing Power, a microfarm in inner-city Milwaukee, has a modest mission: to bring more fresh fruit to the low-income, mostly black neighborhood. "That was and is our number-one priority," says Baricos, who ran a short-lived community farmers' market before starting the farm and store. In addition to the fresh produce—sourced from within and without city limits—the compound's "demonstration beds" are staffed by master gardeners, who teach residents how to grow peppers and squash from their own porches.

Though only 15 to 20 percent of the market's customers actually live in Hollygrove, those who do appreciate the investment. "It's extremely well received because it's coming from within the neighborhood," says Alicia Vance, a NOFFN community organizer. "It could be a car dealership, but it's not—it's a market."

Naturally, the Hollygrove model represents "a very innovative approach to the way they're using an existing parcel of land," Derven says. It is also, he points out, a means to connect with a community otherwise disinclined to buy into slow-foodism. Other urban farmers, like Joe Brock, have crafted equally ingenious solutions to the problem of a concrete jungle. His Mid-City Community Garden uses raised and irrigated planters to seed cucumbers and tomatillos atop the asphalt. Like Brock's, most of the gardens I visit are relatively new—begun in 2007 or 2008—and were formed in direct response to the extreme lack of food access in post-Katrina New Orleans. This alone distinguishes the city from other sites of trendy food-justice and sustainability movements.

But will this model—carving out the space, time and backache required to raise grocery-quality fruits and veggies—prove scalable for the millions of American eaters who have also been left adrift?

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The question is primarily economic in nature. During World War II, 20 million citizen gardens were producing roughly 16 billion pounds of food. That's far less than the 350 billion pounds now available annually in the United States. But today's small-scale growers are trying to make every harvest count twice: as nourishment and as savings. "It's the epitome of a community effort," says Phillip Soulet, who co-farms a plot just beneath the I-10 expressway, which churns through the city center. For families struggling in the ongoing recession, "a basket of fresh produce… helps them not only financially but nutritionally." Though the microfarm has reduced his food budget by an estimated 50 to 60 percent, Soulet is concerned about the economy of his efforts. "I'm on this borderline size," he says, walking the chicken run that helps fertilize his shaded plots, "where I can't produce a huge amount to take to market, but it's certainly enough to share."

Other city growers have also found it difficult to make money and to make a difference. Baricos spends around $14,000 monthly on fresh produce, which he sells to several hundred customers each month in food boxes that cost $25 each and include roughly a dozen different items. For families in the neighborhood, the price is a (nutritious) steal—but the work hasn't turned a profit: "Right now we're just in survival mode," he says.

This movement also relies upon behavioral change. Thankfully, the cause of nutrition, food justice and urban gardening seems to have found an A-list advocate in Michelle Obama. But changing the way America eats is a complex challenge, one that will require more than mere observation of the Obamas tending the herbs, fruits and arugula in the new organic White House kitchen garden. While the first lady says that her initiative "gives the community an opportunity to come together around gardening and growing their own food," she has assured food-policy watchers that "government also has a role to play."

Indeed, a growing number of policy-makers believe that urban gardens in New Orleans can backstop a constellation of public problems, from nutritional disparities to unemployment to the daunting, ugly sea of abandoned stoops and stores in the city. Wynecta Fisher, director of the New Orleans mayor's office of environmental affairs, has been a rare ally for a movement that has operated largely beneath the radar of city government. She says she "doesn't believe in green" but sees urban agriculture as the kind of smart growth that New Orleans has achieved naturally for decades. "If you can teach someone a skill, and also teach them to look at farming as an entrepreneurial thing, then it's a win-win," she says. "It's a sneaky way to get a triple bottom line."

Market Umbrella, a farmers' market and food-policy center, has been trying to crack this nut since 1995. The twice-weekly markets are cheery re-creations of what executive director Richard McCarthy describes, with reverence, as "a 6,000-year-old tradition." Their sellers hail from regional hamlets like Mandeville and Mount Hermon, and they grin as they discuss the importance of a steady income in a recession. On a recent morning in the mixed-income neighborhood that hosts the markets,

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McCarthy munches blueberries with a deadly serious mien. "[Farmers' markets] are thought of as thrown together, informal and anarchic," he says. "But it's really good economic development strategy that bridges rural and urban supply and demand."

As one of the first movers and earliest returners after Katrina, Market Umbrella has been able to set up a sustained data-gathering system for the cycle of supply and demand in New Orleans. Its transaction research evaluates how and when and what consumers consume, attempting to "speak the same language of the grocery stores," says McCarthy, for maximum political influence. And it has created best practices for other local food advocates to follow: in order to combat the digital divide created when the Department of Agriculture's food stamp program went paperless, it established a token system that allows shoppers to pay with EBT credits—drawing in underserved or untraditional marketgoers.

With NOFFN, the New Orleans farming collectives have realized that urban agriculture necessarily returns to matters of local and federal lawmaking, from school nutrition to smart zoning provisions. And increasingly, land use is becoming the dominant consideration in the equation—raising touchy questions of ownership, gentrification and eminent domain.

The political dysfunction still gripping the city impedes efforts to expand the narrow palate and poor nutrition of those who have returned.

In Hollygrove, Broom and Derven point out empty homes spray-painted with a telltale "X" left over from the search for Katrina's dead. Four years after the storm that exiled more than 200,000 residents, 65,888 of these vacant lots remain (in terms of residential blight, the city is second only to Detroit). Yet, in Derven's eyes, the disemboweled homes hold great potential. "People talk about economies of scale," she says. "Even if a proportion of those lots go into [food] production, that's quite an impact."

In November 2005 the Urban Land Institute prepared a report tacitly encouraging this new vision for New Orleans: it drew a palette of dense urban areas separated, into parts, by waves of green. Some planners and anthropologists believe urban farms can provide a transitional use for the otherwise vacant lots that Katrina left behind (there is even evidence that certain plants might detoxify the storm-tainted soil). "The civic benefits, the safe space, that surround urban farms might actually attract new development," says Mary Rowe, founder of the New Orleans Institute for Resilience and Innovation.

Others, however, view the whole movement as a costly indulgence, anathema to more traditional investments. "I've got to convince my boss and the city council that this is as important as passing a crime-zone bill," says Fisher. "We have had to tread very, very lightly."

Returning land to seed is particularly problematic in New Orleans—vacated not by foreclosures or manufacturing loss but by accident. In the decimated Broadmoor and Lower Ninth Ward neighborhoods, that is "definitely part of the conversation and the concern," says Broom. "You'll get people saying, Why don't you focus that attention on bringing the people back?"

This question prompts an uncomfortably circular logic: because food and other amenities are still scarce, so are residents. While New Orleans's empty stoops suggest a new frontier, the political dysfunction still gripping the city impedes efforts to expand the narrow palate and poor nutrition of those who have returned.

"You look at this land, and farming should be easy—you till it, you divide it and you farm it," says Peter Nguyen, gazing at a series of relief maps of New Orleans East in a community center housed in a local strip mall. "But it's never that simple." Fully 90 percent of this heavily Vietnamese part of the city grew and sold the basil, daikon and other vegetables so basic to Vietnam's cuisine, in open markets right on the bayou. Today, Nguyen's Viet Village farming collective is trying to restore the astonishing network of community gardens that were there before the storm. Nguyen's group hopes to convert twenty acres of wetlands into an organic production farm, but legal battles for property rights and appropriate permitting for the swampland have soured him on the potential for meaningful community development. "People ask why New Orleans hasn't redeveloped," he says, "and it's because of this."

Such barriers to entry are numerous and arbitrary: farmers' markets are not covered by zoning law; growers can't sell food straight from a garden plot; fledgling horticulturalists "don't have the resources to shape public policy at the state level," says McCarthy. There have been successes, like a city food charter drafted by the grassroots New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee. But Tooker notes that despite the interdisciplinary challenges surrounding food security, state and local government are essentially absent from the conversation: "I never saw or heard of anything from the city, state or federal government that affected food access in New Orleans," she says. "Just like with everything else, all the recovery work was done by individuals and nonprofits who just took the bull by the horns and did it."

Given the still-shocking dearth of rebuilding and recovery in the city, years removed from the "heckuva job" by the federal government, the volume and coordination of activity surrounding urban farming is outstanding. And while the open wound of Katrina has become an opportunity to leap forward and lead, nearly all the growers, volunteers, organizers and policy specialists I spoke with in New Orleans believe the future of urban agriculture will be as much a matter of reversion as of revolution. "This is a city of food; our heritage is food here," says Broom. "There still was and is a lot of people who have direct roots to rural communities and to the earth." Hence the NOFFN slogan: "Growing back to our roots." ■

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Cafeteria Consciousness

Concerned about global warming, students are pushing for change—in their dining halls.

by ANNA LAPPÉ

It was a little after midnight, long after the official conference had ended and the 500-plus attendees of the 2007 Food and Society annual get-together had turned in for the night. Tim Galarneau of the California Student Sustainability Coalition; Anim Steel from the Food Project, a Boston-based food and farming nonprofit; David Schwartz from Brown University; and a few other young people were still talking. Hunched over a table in an empty meeting room at the Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City, Michigan, the group had already been together for hours, continuing a conversation that had been going on for more than a year.

What was keeping them up so late? They were comparing notes. Each was witnessing a burgeoning student movement on college campuses to bring sustainably and fairly raised food into dining halls. From coast to coast, a similar energy and enthusiasm seemed to be bubbling up. Galarneau was seeing it in the massive effort to transform university food across California's esteemed public university system. Schwartz was seeing it back in Providence at Brown, where students were getting increasingly vocal about finding sustainable food. And Steel, a leader in the food-justice movement, had a frontline view from the Food Project's youth-run farm in Boston. From their unique perspectives, both sensed that students were hankering to speak up more loudly for sustainable food; they just needed an effective way to do so. Out of this ongoing conversation, the group would launch the Real Food Challenge.

The concept is simple, really. Students, some who pay as much as $100,000, or more, for four years at a private college, should have a say in what grub their schools serve—and that food should reflect shared values of fairness and sustainability. The Real Food Challenge provides an organizing tool to empower students to persuade their schools to make the move. Schools that join the challenge pledge to shift at least 20 percent of school food to "real food"—sustainably raised, grown with fairness, and from local and regional farms—by 2020.

In addition to this concrete goal, the Challenge also offers schools and student organizers a support network, resources for finding sources of real food, organizer training and a "real food calculator." The calculator provides campuses with a mechanism for quantifying real food, for determining the percentage of real food they currently serve and assessing improvement over time.

The excitement about the Real Food Challenge, Galarneau said, is partly that it taps into students' energy to address the global warming impact of their campuses. One strategy of student environmental activists has been to focus on persuading their schools to reduce their global warming impact through rethinking institutional energy use and turning to renewable-energy sources. One of the most successful campus-based efforts to date is the Campus Climate Challenge. The initiative has helped young people in colleges and high schools across the United States and Canada organize to campaign for—and win—100 percent clean-energy policies at their schools.

The Campus Climate Challenge served as inspiration for the Real Food Challenge founders, who were interested in channeling student excitement in a new direction. "There was a lot of momentum around climate change on campuses. Al Gore had swept onto the scene," said Galarneau. "But the activism lacked a connection with the food system." And yet the global food system, from seed to plate to landfill, is responsible for as much as one-third of all greenhouse-gas emissions, largely because it is the single greatest force behind deforestation and soil degradation, both of which release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Indeed, livestock production alone is responsible for 18 percent of the world's emissions, more than those produced by all transportation—every SUV, steamer ship and jet plane combined.

"Many young people are realizing that the food system is a key contributor to global warming. They know that we've got to talk about food if we're going to advance a broader sustainability agenda," Galarneau noted.

It would take another year and a half of conversations like the one back in that stuffy meeting room before the Real Food Challenge was officially launched in September 2008. But

This article is adapted from the forthcoming book Diet for a Hot Planet *(Bloomsbury), to be published in March. Anna Lappé is the national bestselling author of* Hope's Edge *(Tarcher/Penguin) and* Grub *(Tarcher/Penguin) and co-founder of the Small Planet Institute and Small Planet Fund. She serves on the advisory council of the Real Food Challenge.*

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within a month, the original crew had hard proof that their hunch had been right.

The Challenge launched with eleven pilot schools. Organizers hoped several hundred more would soon join. "During one of our conference calls that first month, we checked to see how many campuses had come on board. We had hoped for maybe 200," said Galarneau. "We already had 230. That's when we knew we'd hit a nerve. People were biting."

By the end of that first year, 329 campuses had joined the network, from Brown University to City College of New York to DeAnza Community College in San Mateo, California. The determined young people who lead the Challenge expect that in another year that number could grow to 1,000, about a quarter of all the two- and four-year colleges and universities in the country. To put the potential impact in context, US colleges and universities currently spend more than $4 billion annually on school food. (Roughly half of school food is contracted out to food-service companies; the rest is managed by the schools themselves.) If it's successful, and the participating schools shift 20 percent of their purchases, the Real Food Challenge will have helped to move nearly $1 billion of food purchases toward sustainability by 2020.

"We're talking about shaking up the system," said Galarneau, "and young people like that."

Connecting the overarching mission of the Real Food Challenge—increasing the amount of fairly and sustainably raised local foods on campuses—to the effort to combat climate change is a complex challenge. First and foremost, there's the problem of quantifying the impact. Unlike getting data on campus energy use—emissions are relatively easy to measure and are usually the direct result of action (or inaction)—getting data on food is difficult. Campuses rarely know the full life story of the food they purchase. In part that's because food-related emissions mostly occur during production, processing and distribution—long before the food shows up in the cafeteria. Plus, even for the "direct" emissions—energy used in dining halls, food waste ending up in landfills—schools often don't have systems in place yet for accurate measurement.

But a data gap doesn't have to mean an action gap. The Real Food Challenge stresses that there are guiding principles for planet-friendly choices schools can make, including cutting back on meat and dairy, reducing waste and packaging, and choosing more sustainably raised and local foods, for instance.

It was not long before the Real Food Challenge piqued the interest of food-service companies. In that initial launch month, said Galarneau, they were contacted by Aramark, Sodexo and Bon Appétit—some of the biggest players in college food service. "They were calling to say they wanted to partner with the Challenge," he said. But Galarneau and the other organizers were wary of official corporate partnerships, concerned that companies would just be latching on to the initiative without actually changing their practices. They'd already seen food-service companies pay lip service to sustainability in their contracts without embracing broad change in the dining halls. As we talked, Galarneau described a 135-page food-service contract he was reviewing, hunting for language that would provide the company loopholes to skirt sustainability. "The devil is in the details," he said.

(On its own, Bon Appétit, which serves 80 million meals a year at campus and corporate facilities, has launched a low-carbon diet initiative, reducing food waste, promoting composting, educating guests about their food choices and cutting back on beef purchases by 33 percent systemwide between 2007 and 2009.)

Organizers of the Real Food Challenge say their primary focus is on building student engagement. Because food-service directors typically don't have time to make the needed changes, schools need students to help make it happen. Plus, as Steel says, "no matter how committed many of these companies say they are, they can only go as far as students push them."

The Challenge, while popular among students on participating campuses, still faces many hurdles, including getting the ear of administrators facing one of the worst economic downturns in generations. But as the organizers like to point out, many of the climate-friendly principles actually help schools save money. Students at Stanford, for example, borrowed the Love Food, Hate Waste campaign from the United Kingdom to develop a way for people on campus to compost their waste easily. Erin Gaines, former sustainable-foods coordinator at Stanford Dining and Hospitality, and an active member of the Real Food Challenge, told me about their success. In 2007, thanks to the campaign, the school composted 1.2 million pounds of food from campus dining halls and cafes. That's 1.2 million pounds that would have gone into a landfill. Instead, the scraps were taken to a local composting facility, and half of the compost was returned to the school to be used on its gardens and grounds.

Galarneau offered an example from the University of California system. In response to student campaigning, the Santa Cruz campus decided to go "trayless" to address the pile-on phenomenon: students grabbing more food than their stomachs can hold. No trays means less washing. The school has already calculated a savings of more than 1 million gallons of water a year. And no trays means less food waste. Since the policy was introduced, the campus has seen food waste decline by one-third, and it is committed to diverting the remaining waste to compost. "The mantra is 'upcycling,'" said Galarneau, "reducing waste before it becomes waste and then reintegrating waste, through composting, so that it never becomes waste." This one step has helped reduce energy consumption (less dishwater to heat) and emissions (all that food kept out of landfills), saving the school money, which in turn leaves more resources to invest in sustainable food choices.

Galarneau cited an observation economists have made: that once a consumer trend reaches 20 percent of a market, it can become an unstoppable force. What the young people in the Challenge are doing, says Galarneau, is "testing that theory with a push toward purchases that value justice and sustainability." When I talked with Katrina Norbom, a Real Food Challenge member at the University of North Florida, she said, "No matter what, it comes down to the students. If we can create enough support, we can make it happen."

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This determination is making an impact well beyond the campus. Alumni of the Real Food Challenge are heading into communities where they're using their passion and organizing skills to expand the market for real food across the country. When I asked Galarneau and Steel for examples, they rattled off a bunch: Sue DeBlieck from Iowa State University is running a farm-to-school project in Maine; Sam Lipschultz, a 2009 Sarah Lawrence graduate, is starting a youth-run farmers' market in one of Brooklyn's poorest neighborhoods; and UC Irvine's Hai Vo, who had been consulting with other youth-empowerment projects after college, just sent in his applications for programs in farm apprenticeship.

The organizers know that shifting 20 percent of school food to "real food" by 2020 is ambitious; but their vision is even bolder—and broader—than that. Currently less than 2 percent of food on most campuses is "real." Nationwide, the figure isn't much different. As Steel said, "If we can't make this shift happen on a campus, how can we expect it to happen elsewhere? And if we *can* do it on campuses, then we can start asking, Why can't we do it everywhere?" ■

Wendell Berry's Wisdom

Today's conversation about food was started by dot-connecting writers like Berry in the 1970s.

by MICHAEL POLLAN

A few days after Michelle Obama broke ground on an organic vegetable garden on the South Lawn of the White House in March, the business section of the Sunday *New York Times* published a cover story bearing the headline Is a Food Revolution Now in Season? The article, written by the paper's agriculture reporter, said that "after being largely ignored for years by Washington, advocates of organic and locally grown food have found a receptive ear in the White House."

Certainly these are heady days for people who have been working to reform the way Americans grow food and feed themselves—the "food movement," as it is now often called. Markets for alternative kinds of food—local and organic and pastured—are thriving, farmers' markets are popping up like mushrooms and for the first time in many years the number of farms tallied in the Department of Agriculture's census has gone up rather than down. The new secretary of agriculture has dedicated his department to "sustainability" and holds meetings with the sorts of farmers and activists who not many years ago stood outside the limestone walls of the USDA holding signs of protest and snarling traffic with their tractors. Cheap words, you might say; and it is true that, so far at least, there have been more words than deeds—but some of those words are astonishing. Like these: shortly before his election, Barack Obama told a reporter for *Time* that "our entire agricultural system is built on cheap oil"; he went on to connect the dots between the sprawling monocultures of industrial agriculture and, on the one side, the energy crisis and, on the other, the healthcare crisis.

Americans today are having a national conversation about food and agriculture that would have been impossible to imagine even a few short years ago. To many Americans it must sound like a brand-new conversation, with its bracing talk about the high price of cheap food, or the links between soil and health,

or the impossibility of a society eating well and being in good health unless it also farms well.

But the national conversation unfolding around the subject of food and farming really began in the 1970s, with the work of writers like Wendell Berry, Frances Moore Lappé, Barry Commoner and Joan Gussow. All four of these writers are supreme dot-connectors, deeply skeptical of reductive science and far ahead not only in their grasp of the science of ecology but in their ability to think ecologically: to draw lines of connection between a hamburger and the price of oil, or between the vibrancy of life in the soil and the health of the plants, animals and people eating from that soil.

I would argue that the conversation got under way in earnest in 1971, when Berry published an article in *The Last Whole Earth Catalogue* introducing Americans to the work of Sir Albert Howard, the British agronomist whose thinking had

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deeply influenced Berry's own since he first came upon it in 1964. Indeed, much of Berry's thinking about agriculture can be read as an extended elaboration of Howard's master idea that farming should model itself on natural systems like forests and prairies, and that scientists, farmers and medical researchers need to reconceive "the whole problem of health in soil, plant, animal and man as one great subject." No single quotation appears more often in Berry's writing than that one, and with good reason: it is manifestly true (as even the most reductive scientists are coming to recognize) and, as a guide to thinking through so many of our problems, it is inexhaustible.

That same year, 1971, Lappé published *Diet for a Small Planet*, which linked modern meat production (and in particular the feeding of grain to cattle) to the problems of world hunger and the environment. Later in the decade, Commoner implicated industrial agriculture in the energy crisis, showing us just how much oil we were eating when we ate from the industrial food chain; and Gussow explained to her nutritionist colleagues that the problem of dietary health could not be understood without reference to the problem of agriculture.

Looking back on this remarkably fertile body of work, which told us all we needed to know about the true cost of cheap food and the value of good farming, is to register two pangs of regret, one personal, the other more political: first, that as a young writer coming to these subjects a couple of decades later, I was rather less original than I had thought; and second, that as a society we failed to heed a warning that might have averted or at least mitigated the terrible predicament in which we now find ourselves.

For what would we give today to have back the "environmental crisis" that Berry wrote about so prophetically in the 1970s, a time still innocent of the problem of climate change? Or to have back the comparatively manageable public health problems of that period, before obesity and type 2 diabetes became "epidemic"? (Most experts date the obesity epidemic to the early 1980s.)

But history will show that we failed to take up the invitation to begin thinking ecologically. As soon as oil prices subsided and Jimmy Carter was rusticated to Plains, Georgia (along with his cardigan, thermostat and solar panels), we went back to business—and agribusiness—as usual. In the mid-1980s Ronald Reagan removed Carter's solar panels from the roof of the White House, and the issues that the early wave of ecologically conscious food writers had raised were pushed to the margins of national politics and culture.

When I began writing about agriculture in the late '80s and '90s, I quickly figured out that no editor in Manhattan thought the subject timely or worthy of his or her attention, and that I would be better off avoiding the word entirely and talking instead about food, something people then still had some use for and cared about, yet oddly never thought to connect to the soil or the work of farmers.

It was during this period that I began reading Berry's work closely—avidly, in fact, because I found in it practical answers to questions I was struggling with in my garden. I had begun growing a little of my own food, not on a farm but in the backyard of a second home in the exurbs of New York, and had found myself completely ill prepared, especially when it came to the challenges posed by critters and weeds. An obedient child of Thoreau and Emerson (both of whom mistakenly regarded weeds as emblems of wildness and gardens as declensions from nature), I honored the wild and didn't fence off my vegetables from the encroaching forest. I don't have to tell you how well that turned out. Thoreau did plant a bean field at Walden, but he couldn't square his love of nature with the need to defend his crop from weeds and birds, and eventually he gave up on agriculture. Thoreau went on to declare that "if it were proposed to me to dwell in the neighborhood of the most beautiful garden that ever human art contrived, or else of a dismal swamp, I should certainly decide for the swamp." With that slightly obnoxious declaration, American writing about nature all but turned its back on the domestic landscape. It's not at all surprising that we got better at conserving wilderness than at farming and gardening.

It was Wendell Berry who helped me solve my Thoreau problem, providing a sturdy bridge over the deep American divide between nature and culture. Using the farm rather than the wilderness as his text, Berry taught me I had a legitimate quarrel with nature—a lover's quarrel—and showed me how to conduct it without reaching for the heavy artillery. He relocated wildness from the woods "out there" (beyond the fence) to a handful of garden soil or the green shoot of a germinating pea, a necessary quality that could be not just conserved but cultivated. He marked out a path that led us back into nature, no longer as spectators but as full-fledged participants.

Obviously much more is at stake here than a garden fence. My Thoreau problem is another name for the problem of American environmentalism, which historically has had much more to say about leaving nature alone than about how we might use it well. To the extent that we're finally beginning to hear a new, more neighborly conversation between American environmentalists and American farmers, not to mention between urban eaters and rural food producers, Berry deserves much of the credit for getting it started with sentences like these:

> Why should conservationists have a positive interest in… farming? There are lots of reasons, but the plainest is: Conservationists eat. To be interested in food but not in food production is clearly absurd. Urban conservationists may feel entitled to be unconcerned about food production because they are not farmers. But they can't be let off so easily, for they are all farming by proxy. They can eat only if land is farmed on their behalf by somebody somewhere in some fashion. If conservationists will attempt to resume responsibility for their need to eat, they will be led back fairly directly to all their previous concerns for the welfare of nature.
>
> —"Conservationist and Agrarian," 2002

That we are all implicated in farming—that, in Berry's now-famous formulation, "eating is an agricultural act"—is perhaps his signal contribution to the rethinking of food and farming under way today. All those taking part in that conversation, whether in the White House or at the farmers' market, are deep in his debt. ■

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Mississippi Growing

An African-American community with New Deal roots finds some hope in a farmers' market.

by HABIBA ALCINDOR

Locals in the sleepy Delta town of Mileston, Mississippi, where King Cotton once reigned supreme, have lately begun to note a resurgence of wild fig trees and blackberry bushes, while creatures like lightning bugs, bees and caterpillars have bounced back after enduring heavy casualties from the harsh pesticides used to combat cotton's archenemy, the boll weevil. Calvin Head, a farmer and local leader, together with a handful of other small farmers in Mileston, a New Deal planned community, sees an opportunity in today's shifting economic environment to nurture another fragile population: its residents.

Mileston is part of Holmes County, which happens to be the poorest county in the poorest state in the Union. Less cotton means fewer jobs at the cotton gin; alternative cash crops with shorter growing cycles have similarly reduced the need for labor in the field, much of which is now provided by migrant workers. The Mississippi Delta region is also the national epicenter of obesity, with all its attendant health complications.

But Mileston itself possesses a rich cultural history as fundamental to its identity as its red earth. It was conceived as an experiment in cooperative living during the Depression and came into its own as a result of collective action in the '60s. The wisdom accrued by past generations has informed the community's idea to grow and distribute its own food through a farmers' market program.

Under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Resettlement Administration, vast tracts of land were purchased from wealthy landowners, outfitted to facilitate a communal—some might say socialist—agrarian culture and then populated with poor people. In Mileston, black sharecroppers otherwise consigned to eking out a subsistence on the land of white plantation owners were transplanted to plots as large as 100 acres, which—with hard work, technical guidance and financial assistance in the form of low-interest loans—they could eventually purchase from the government.

By the 1950s, most of the tenants had become landowners, and Mileston was firmly established as an all-black resettlement community, one of thirteen in America. Head's grandparents Robert and Pecolia were among these first landowners. His grandfather, a carpenter, built the town's community center, now in ruins.

While deteriorating economic conditions and discriminatory practices by the white power structure whittled away at black ownership of land in the decades that followed, African-Americans continue to constitute 75 percent of Mileston's population and own more than 70 percent of its land. In addition Mileston retains a community-oriented ethic that distinguishes it even from nearby Tchula. "Just four miles down the road," insists the Rev. Tom Collins, who participates in the farmers' market program and whose small congregation is based in Tchula, "and you talk to people, and their ideology is totally different from what's down here. Totally different."

Members of the West Holmes Community Development Organization (WHCDO) got together and brainstormed the idea for the farmers' market in 2000. With the cooperation of the State of Mississippi, they created a program that enlists high school students to plant and harvest vegetable crops on land donated by farmers in the area. Residents enrolled in the USDA's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program can now redeem their vouchers for organic produce. The students learn how to assess their market, set prices and keep a tally of what's sold each day. At the end of the season, the farmers split the proceeds with the young entrepreneurs.

The roughly $700 a month earned by each of the fifteen to twenty students in the farmers' market program is not a living wage, but it goes a long way in supplementing the income of families straddling the poverty line. Jessica Howard, who plans to pursue a nursing career after graduation, uses the money she earns at the market to pay for her school uniforms and help her mother, who is disabled, with other family expenses. Her schoolmate Russell Scott also appreciates the extra income. "It's a nice amount to have, but when you're doing things for the elderly and young people, money don't really come to your mind."

Another participant, 24-year-old Carlos Walden, tells of how he once accepted $10 to deliver drugs for a man who turned out to be an undercover cop, a desperate decision that landed Carlos in prison. Today, Carlos is an enthusiastic advocate of the farmers' market program, describing the pride he feels when he's able to put food he grew and harvested himself on the table for his two young children.

What came as a surprise to Head and other farmers was the level of demand for homegrown produce. Once WIC recipients and senior citizens were served, other people in the neighborhood, including restaurant owners, arrived at the market waving dollars to buy freshly picked okra, peas, watermelons and the runaway favorite: greens of the mustard, collard and turnip varieties. Miss Pat's, a local eatery consisting of a shed with a kitchen in back and a picnic bench in front, is one business that benefits from the market. Five dollars will buy a baked chicken lunch with side dishes of stewed tomatoes with okra, and butter beans with bacon; or an order of meatloaf with collard greens and baked squash, depending on what's available. "She makes a killing," confides Head.

Members of the WHCDO believe that what began as a simple way to "give the young people something to do" can

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expand into a successful commercial enterprise. Sysco foods has been a client; even Wal-Mart has made inquiries. The students' eyes light up when they discuss the prospect of supplying produce to their high school cafeteria. But even though interest in the program runs high, it can meet demand only if there is a threefold increase in available land. Head has met some resistance in his efforts to persuade growers to devote more of their acreage to "truck patch" farming. "We did a market analysis to show them how much money they could make off just one acre of tomatoes," says Head. "You can make about $10,000 at a high yield." Unfortunately, soil healthy enough to grow vegetables is in short supply. Farmer Joseph Anderson explained why he didn't have any vegetables ready yet for the market: nearby aerial spraying of cotton pesticides had obliterated his first crop, forcing him to replant. The chemical cocktail is so toxic that laws prohibit spraying during improper wind conditions, which allowed Anderson and other affected farmers to sue for damages.

If enough farmers eventually come around, the next looming hurdle for the program is the purchase of a refrigerated storage unit. When the kids sell out of produce this season, their only recourse will be to go back into the field to replenish their stock. Last, a greenhouse would enable the program to continue year round, but that's still a distant dream.

"We were the ones who started the civil rights movement. Here, right here in Mileston," declares 69-year-old farmer Griffin McLaurin, the program's biggest vegetable producer. He remembers the day Hartman Turnbow stepped forward when the sheriff demanded to know which of the fourteen men standing in front of the county courthouse was going to be first to attempt to register to vote. "He went in there, and they gave him four sheets of paper that long. He had to pay poll tax, and he had to interpret all these different kind of government things that was on there. There was no way in the world you could pass." It was April 1963, more than a year before Freedom Summer.

"Things have changed down here, but there's a whole lot of things haven't changed," McLaurin observes. Because Mississippi remains segregated (Bee Lake divides the white section of West Holmes County from the surrounding area), class issues easily translate into race issues. McLaurin views the farmers' market as an almost quixotic countermeasure against the dual onslaught of poor nutrition and poverty besieging the black community's next generation. "We got all this land belonging to what we call 'the project' here. Rest of it is being farmed by the white man. He's the one making the money on all of it. And he's using it like he wants to use it. Puts whatever pesticides or chemicals he wants on it, and we can't even raise no mustard or turnip greens on it."

Members of the next generation are bound to reap at least one valuable lesson from their farmers' market: wherever their efforts eventually take them, the struggle must begin in their own backyard. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

the Cowgirl Creamery, especially its sinfully rich Red Hawk washed-rind, triple-cream cheese; rotating crops of berries and stone fruits like apricots, peaches and nectarines; Andy & Cindy Thai Cuisine's red snapper served in a banana-leaf cup; and, for the eye's pleasure, beautiful flowers (the biggest, most intensely purple freesias I've ever seen). The list is endless and wonderful.
ANDREA HATTERSLEY

MILFORD, CONN.
In the summer one of our favorite things to do is to head to Wooster Square in New Haven on Saturday mornings. The City Seed Farmers' Market is everything you have come to expect from such a market—plus the farmers are nice, the shoppers are happy and my kids can snack.

Around 11:15, I make my way over to Frank Pepe's pizza. The crowd is beginning to wind down the block. When the doors open at 11:30, I make my way to the counter, where I usually order two pies to go. They're cooked in a brick oven over a flame and are, hands down, the finest examples of New Haven–style pies around.

With a week's supply of fresh vegetables and fruit, we grab the pizzas and have a picnic in Wooster Square. Surrounded by beautiful old buildings and with a glint in our eye, we feast on Pepe's, throw the ball around and revel in living in New England.
STEPHEN SCHMIDT

LOS ANGELES
A trip to the Tudor House in Santa Monica forces you to think of how you'd feel at your Granny's if she were English and enlisted a Scottish lassie to serve you a "proper cup of tea." You'd have your choice of savory pies, and quiches laced with astonishing cheeses, the likes of which you can't find anywhere else but in England. On Fridays, catch the "Stimulus Dinner"—two entrees for the price of one.
NORA LOHMANN

CORVALLIS, ORE.
In my town of 50,000, we are very lucky to have a food cooperative, First Alternative, which has two full stores. The fresh food is organic and labeled according to where it comes from, and many of the canned goods are organic (not faux organic). The co-op gives 1 percent of Wednesday's sales to charity. Also, you are given one dried bean for every cloth bag you use; the beans can then be deposited into one of four bins representing four charities. At the end of the year, those charities receive contributions based on the number of beans.
CHARLES C. LANGFORD

SAN FRANCISCO
Quirky and wonderful Uglesich's restaurant in New Orleans, sad to say, closed in 2005, a few months before Hurricane Katrina. But I'm grateful for the many meals was able to enjoy there. A model mom-and-pop endeavor, Uglesich's featured Louisiana seafood and unique recipes along with traditional New Orleans dishes. The combination of sublime food, down-home dining (crates of potatoes could be piled along the wall next to your seat) and friendly banter always sent this pescetarian into gustatory heaven. Barbecued oysters, fried green tomatoes, shrimp Uggie and anything else that emerged from the kitchen was consumed with gusto by loyal customers and newcomers alike. Uggie's was a paragon of slow food and localism before they were popular.
JAY ROSNER

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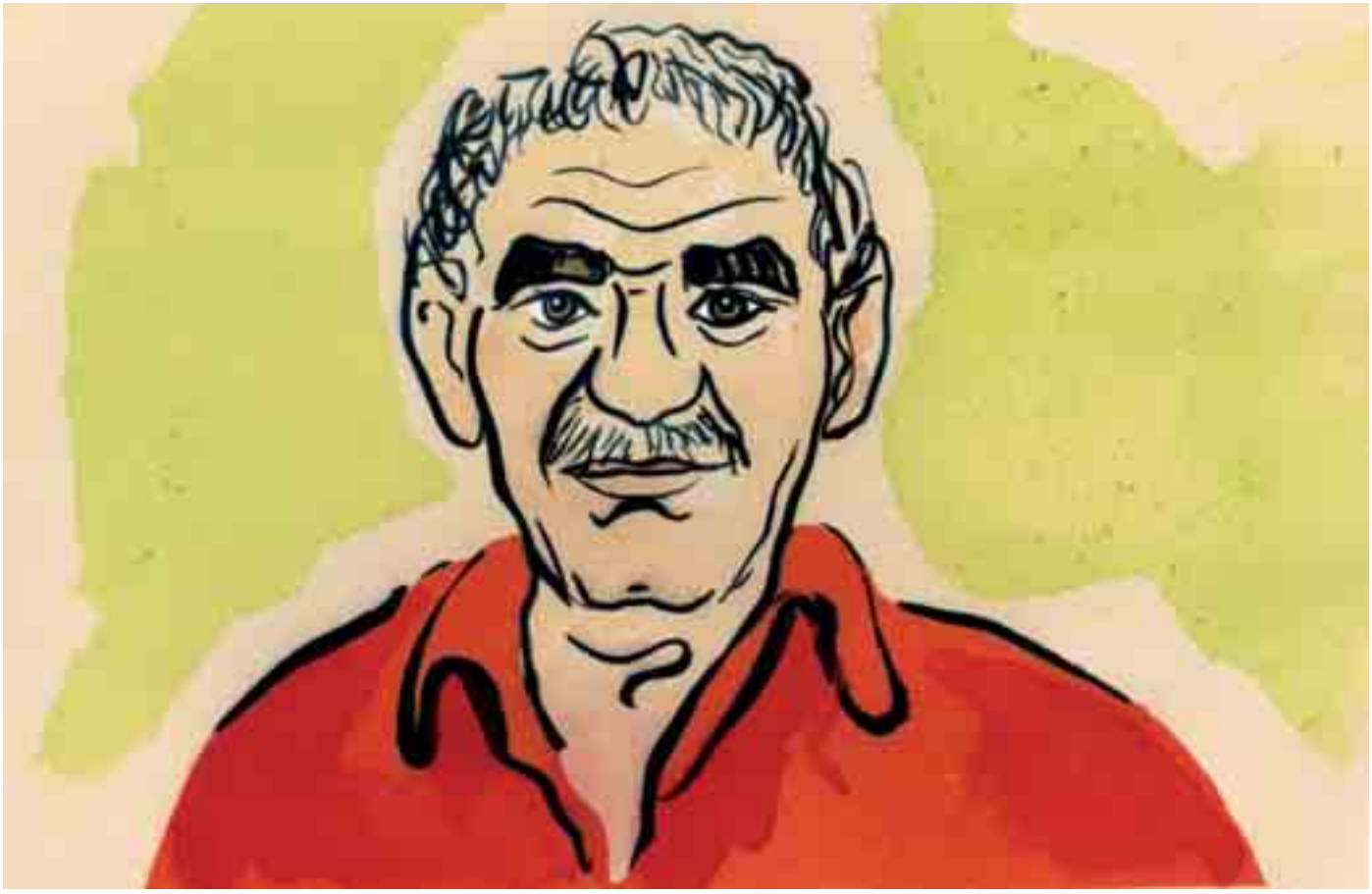
Books & the Arts.



ADRIAN BELLESGUARD

Aracataca and Sucre

by WILLIAM DERESIEWICZ

Gabriel García Márquez
A Life.
By Gerald Martin.
Knopf. 642 pp. $37.50.

"García Márquez is like a head of state," Fidel Castro has remarked. "The only question is, which state?" The comment starts to take us into what's unique about its subject's work and life—not least because of who delivered it. No other writer in our time has operated on so vast a scale. None has approached his literary achievement; none has so parlayed achievement into political prominence. His multifarious career as novelist, journalist, screenwriter, institution-builder, freelance diplomat, all-around wise man, global celebrity and keeper of his own gaudy legend is unified by one idea: the writer as public man. For García Márquez, literature is the continuation of politics by other means—unless it's the other way around. Other contemporary writers have sought such a role—Norman Mailer, Günter Grass, A.B. Yehoshua, Arundhati Roy—but none has approached his continental, even worldwide reach. He is Tolstoy for the twentieth century, a Latin American Dickens. Above all, he is Joyce, for while Dickens aimed himself at particular ills, García Márquez, inspired by Castro's example to lead a comparable revolution in the mental sphere, created the unformed conscience of his race. Before he could do so, however—and this is the great story of his life—he had to discover his own.

How Gerald Martin manages to compress that life into fewer than 600 shrewd, lucid, incisive pages is a wonder in itself. That he is English, and writes in English, appears to have been little impediment. An esteemed scholar of Latin American literature, Martin interviewed more than 300 subjects over the course of seventeen years. A footnote mentions a 2,000-plus-page manuscript from which the present volume has been extracted. When the larger version is published, as is Martin's intention, it will undoubtedly be worth reading to the last drop.

Martin has not only beaten his way through the thicket of conflicting versions that García Márquez has offered of almost every major event in his life; he evaluates those events with a sensitivity tempered, especially with respect to his subject's inces-

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sant reputation-mongering, by skepticism. His psychological analyses are penetrating but prudent—no semi-Freudian overreach here—his biographer's inevitable "no doubts" and "must surely haves" generally persuasive. While he exhibits a degree of sympathetic bias in evaluating García Márquez's political activities, he does not shy away from pointing out his missteps, just as he is candid about the artistic demerits of his lesser works. To his comprehensive grasp of the multifaceted literary context from which his subject's work emerged, Martin adds a thorough knowledge of Colombian history and a sophisticated understanding of cold war politics and culture. His prose, nimble and forceful, is seasoned with wry humor. Best of all is Martin's abundant possession of that rarest and most precious commodity among literary biographers: critical acumen. To encounter his interpretations of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, *No One Writes to the Colonel* and other works—readings that combine biographical acuity with a remarkable feeling for form and voice—is to discover these masterpieces anew.

Martin combines biographical acuity with a remarkable feeling for form and voice.

Gabriel García Márquez was born in 1927 in the small town of Aracataca in his country's sweltering Caribbean coastal zone, a provenance that determined his relationship not only to Colombian society but to the larger currents of world culture. In contrast to the dark clothes and long faces of haughty, chilly Bogotá—Andean, insular—*costeño* culture is unlaced, profane and feverishly exuberant: precisely the qualities that first strike us in so much of García Márquez's work. It is also mongrel; through the world of his childhood blew a "leaf storm" of transients (to take the title of his first book)—Arabs and Gypsies, East Asians and Europeans, Indians from the Sierra and migrants from the old runaway-slave regions—all drawn by the banana plantations of the United Fruit Company. While metropolitan Bogotá sat removed in its high mountain valley, little Aracataca found itself stirred into the great, global mixing bowl of the Caribbean Basin.

As a young boy, the shy, solitary García Márquez looked out upon this tumultuous world from the shelter of the place he would forever after think of simply as The House: his grandparents' compound of verandas, gardens, workshops, plaster saints, guava trees and macaws—a treasure chest of meanings and smells. One of the delights of reading about his life is discovering how many of the marvels recounted in his fiction are *not* made up. There really was a wandering accordionist named Francisco the Man who sang the news of distant places. The writer's grandfather really had been a colonel in the civil wars, really did sire a brood of illegitimate children, really had left his native town after killing a man in an affair of honor, really did spend his retirement making little golden fishes. If the old man represented an amalgam of José Arcadio Buendía, the patriarch, and Colonel Aureliano, the warrior, García Márquez's grandmother was the magnificent Ursula—mercilessly superstitious, iron-willed, a baker of little candy animals—whose family name, Iguarán, she shared. The two figures divided his boyhood world: the rational, practical, public realm of the Colonel, who would take his grandson by the hand as he made his rounds about town, and the domestic, feminine, spirit-ridden space of Tranquilina Iguarán and her fleet of housemaids and aunts. The dictionary on one hand; the fables of the kitchen on the other.

If his grandparents' domain became *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, García Márquez was living there for reasons adumbrated in *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Like Florentino Ariza, the writer's father was a lowly telegraph operator, charming but illegitimate. Like Fermina Daza, his mother was a stubborn beauty whose family refused to sanction the young couple's love. As in the novel, Luisa Santiaga was sent away on an arduous backcountry trek designed to extinguish her passion, only to thwart the scheme with the help of a conspiracy of telegraphists. But the feckless Gabriel Eligio lacked his alter ego's determination and industry, which is why his eldest son was placed with his maternal grandparents for the first ten years of his life, while his mother continued to produce offspring (there would eventually be eleven altogether) and his father bounced from place to place, an itinerant "pharmacist" now.

The parallels with Joyce are noteworthy: the loutish, braggardly father; the large brood of more or less alien younger siblings. García Márquez never seems to have integrated himself into the life of the family once he joined their peregrinations. He refused to accept Gabriel Eligio's authority—the Colonel would always be his real father—and the early sense of maternal abandonment would haunt him for the rest of his life. Sucre, the isolated river town where the family finally dropped anchor, would become Aracataca's demonic twin. The latter was reborn as Macondo, locus of enchantment, the former as the anonymous and malevolent setting of *No One Writes to the Colonel*, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* and *In Evil Hour*, whose intended title was "This Shit-Heap of a Town."

Whatever his struggles in the family, however, García Márquez was valued for another quality he shared with the Irishman: early evidence of intellectual ability. School ignited his wildfire passion for reading, classmates deferred to his superior gifts and a long string of teachers promoted his advancement despite his intractable inability to spell and hopeless incompetence at math. By 20, he was publishing his first stories under the shadow of Kafka while pretending to study law in Bogotá. Within a year, however, fate had taken a sharp turn for both himself and his country. The assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, a charismatic populist who had dared to challenge Colombia's decades-long oligarchic consensus, touched off days of rioting in the capital city and, eventually, the years of right-wing repression known as *La Violencia*. García Márquez would later remark that the *Bogotazo*, as the upheaval became known, was the moment that Colombia finally entered the twentieth century. It certainly marked his own political coming-of-age. By striking coincidence, Gaitán was to have met that day with another 21-year-old, in town for a Pan-American student congress. The name in the slain leader's appointment book read "Fidel Castro."

The *Bogotazo* sent García Márquez back to the coast, where he stumbled into a line of work and a group of friends that would prove the making of his vocation. A chance encounter introduced him to a newspaper editor familiar with his stories, who immediately drafted him onto his staff. Thus began a relentless apprenticeship in the arts of gathering facts and assembling them into convincing narratives. He wrote columns, editorials, unsigned articles, last-minute pieces and whatever else needed to be done—sometimes all in the same day. He learned about voice, tone and structure, how to find a story and how to give it imaginative volume. His journalistic work would continue throughout his career, running in symbiotic parallel to his fiction and eventually including three book-length pieces, *The Story of a Shipwrecked*

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Sailor, *Clandestine in Chile* and *News of a Kidnapping*. "The novel and journalism," he has said, "are children of the same mother."

In his case, journalism was the elder sibling. Discussions of magic realism too often stint the second term in favor of the first. García Márquez did not invent the mode, but he became its most celebrated practitioner as much through the firmness of his realism as through the buoyancy of his magic. His flying carpets soar because he keeps them tethered to the ground, and what enables him to do so is the respect for actuality, and skill in its handling, he developed as a journalist. Missing these, acolytes like Rushdie are flimsy by comparison. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* begins with a set of declarative statements; *Midnight's Children*, with a sequence of narrative postures. A master of rhetoric, García Márquez rejects the postmodern idea that the world is nothing but rhetoric. So magic and realism go hand in hand in his work, like fiction and journalism, legend and fact, Tranquilina's presentiments and the Colonel's definitions. We are back, in his art, to the world of his childhood, which can now be seen as expanding out, along with his growing experience of the world, in concentric circles of mutually invigorating antitheses: grandmother and grandfather, house and town, Aracataca and Sucre, coast and Bogotá—eventually, Latin America and El Norte.

Like God's book, and Joyce's, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* aims to be a universal history.

Meanwhile, as he learned the newspaperman's trade, García Márquez was getting an education of a different kind. Not long after returning to the coast, he fell in with a group of slightly older literary bohemians who became his mentors in drinking, whoring, reading and talking. Under their tutelage, he not only completed his discovery of European Modernism—Virginia Woolf became a major influence, notwithstanding their polar differences in temperament, so much so that he began to sign his columns "Septimus," after the doomed World War I veteran of *Mrs. Dalloway*—but, crucially, was also introduced to the North Americans. His new circle of confident young *costeño* provincials, Martin tells us, was virtually unique in Latin America (and thus a quarter-century ahead of its time) in embracing the culture of the United States. Faulkner became a decisive example—Macondo descends from Yoknapatawpha—Hemingway an icon of craft. And craft itself—"carpentry," "the secrets of [the] trade," "the stubborn difficulties of learning to write"—became the writer's watchword, then and forever. The voracious dedication of García Márquez's early years, when he consumed whole libraries in search of instruction, subjecting books to "a kind of surgical disemboweling until I reached the most recondite mysteries of their structure," laid the foundation for his surpassing virtuosity as a narrative technician.

But that wasn't the only appetite he was indulging. In his memoirs of the time, the word "carouse" comes second in importance only to the word "write." He would work half the night, party the rest and somehow get up in the morning to go back to the newspaper. That is, if he wasn't sleeping there already. His energy was matched by his penury, and he often had no regular place to live, bedding down on rolls of newsprint, on park benches and for one year in a brothel (an experience he'd later give to Florentino Ariza). But though he was the most indigent even among his circle—and would remain in dire poverty for many years—he never asked for money and never complained about his lot, sustaining himself on the eternal foodstuffs of artistic achievement: discipline, fortitude, ambition and self-belief.

He needed every gram of that belief, for despite his growing reputation as a journalist and short story writer, his efforts in the novel were not prospering. He knew what his subject was to be—the manuscript he was tormenting was called *The House*—but he hadn't figured out how to make emotional contact with it. The Proustian moment finally came on a trip back to Aracataca with his mother a few weeks before his twenty-third birthday, his first return since boyhood. The town, they discovered, was a virtual ruin—United Fruit had long since pulled up stakes—but in that land of walking ghosts, amid the vultures and the strays, the young man found his past preserved in layers of memory and dust. He understood what he needed to do; time and consciousness must themselves become both subject and technique. *The House* had been a work in the nineteenth-century style. Now, with the encouragement of Joyce and Woolf and Faulkner, García Márquez saw that he needed to begin by resurrecting his own experience. Writing, which had been an ambition, became a hunger. As soon as he got back home, he launched himself on a new work, the story of a little boy, his mother and grandfather, and an unburied corpse—the past as palpable weight and urgent problem. The novel's setting was baptized after a United Fruit plantation whose name would become the most famous in the annals of postwar fiction. Aracataca had become Macondo. *The House* had become *Leaf Storm*. The young man had become a writer.

Of course, becoming a writer and making a living as one are not the same thing. *Leaf Storm* would not come out for five years and not earn much when it did. In the meantime, García Márquez honed his skills as a reporter, deepened the socialist commitments that had quickened in the *Bogotazo* and acquired a passion for film—in particular, the neorealism of *Bicycle Thieves* and other works, a spare, humane cinema of the poor and dispossessed. These last two developments soon led him down an artistic detour that must be counted as one of the most fortunate wrong turns in literary history. He now saw *Leaf Storm* as too inward and insufficiently engaged, and in the course of a three-year sojourn in Europe, produced *No One Writes to the Colonel*, that classic of white-lipped endurance, and began work on the precise, ironic stories of *Big Mama's Funeral*. But though he eventually turned back to an art of memory, subjectivity and myth, his neorealist phase left him with a permanent commitment to the idea of literature as public act. By writing about the lives of the poor *costeños* among whom he'd grown up—people oppressed by the wealthy, forgotten by the government and ignored by the country's official culture—he would restore them to dignity and visibility.

No One Writes to the Colonel drew on his grandfather's fruitless, interminable wait for a government pension but also on its author's experience of slow starvation in Paris. This time, however, he wasn't starving alone. Though he had left Colombia engaged to the girl he'd been courting for years—Mercedes Barcha, an exotic beauty from his Sucre days—he took up in Paris with a sophisticated young Spanish actress named Tachia Quintana. Tachia was bold, liberated, worldly, artistic—a woman unlike any he'd known before. The affair must have opened up new worlds, and certainly touched him very deeply (while the Spanish edition of *Love in the Time of Cholera* is dedicated to "Mercedes, of course," the French translation would be inscribed to his old girlfriend), but he refused in the end to follow the road it represented, returning instead to South America and the woman who be-

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came his Nora Joyce—the figure who stood for home and would carry it within her wherever they went.

That itinerary was soon shaped by the distant figure who eventually became one of García Márquez's closest friends. His years in Europe, which included several peeks behind the Iron Curtain, had relieved him of any attachment to the Soviet model. Castro's significance, for him, was precisely that he promised a new direction for Latin America. Fervent to join the cause, García Márquez went to work for Prensa Latina, Castro's news service—first in Bogotá, then, for five anxious, unhappy months, in politically hostile New York. But when his patrons were forced out of Prensa—romantic idealism giving way, as he saw it, to Moscow and bureaucracy—he found himself cut off from the revolution. Running out of options, the family made their way to Mexico City—there was a son by now, and would soon be another—a journey that included a fortnight by bus to New Orleans, through the heart of Faulkner country.

Now came the most desperate passage of García Márquez's career. It was one thing to starve himself, quite another to inflict starvation on his children. His career as a journalist had foundered; his fiction was at a standstill. He could neither go back to Colombia nor forward to Cuba. In despair, he went to work in advertising, resigned to the end of his life in literature.

What saved him, like other geniuses pulled back from the brink of obscurity, was the work he'd already done. The Latin American literary efflorescence that would soon become known as *El Boom* was gathering steam in the fiction of Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa and Carlos Fuentes, and through the patronage of Fuentes, García Márquez began to be viewed as a member of the team. With the courage now to return to fiction, he embarked on the road, not to Damascus but to Acapulco, where, en route to a family vacation, he was struck by divine lightning: "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad…"—the first line, or at least the first image (like the Gospels, versions differ) of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in whose tone and point of view the entire work lay coiled.

After two decades of struggle and preparation, the book poured out of him in little more than a year, cheered on by a growing cadre of friends and admirers. Like *Ulysses*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was the novel that everyone had been waiting for—in the former case, to set the crown on Modernism; in the latter, to ignite the powder of the Boom. That García Márquez saw his project in Joycean terms is clear from his memoir, *Living to Tell the Tale*, at the exact center of which he places the story of his introduction to the older work. One day, he writes, a fellow student "placed an awesome tome on the table in front of me and declared with his bishop's authority: 'This is the other Bible.'" Like God's book, and Joyce's, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* aims to be a universal history, beginning with a genesis, ending with an apocalypse and stuffing the whole of human experience in between. But like all great works, including those other two, it is rooted in the particulars of its own time and place—which were, its author now realized, that of Latin America as a whole. The swell of ambition that marked the Boom was incited by the emergence of a new regional consciousness; the aim was no longer just to write novels about Mexico or Argentina or Peru. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, that consciousness was now seen to have found its supreme expression. Through García Márquez, assuming the role of communal storyteller and taking his stance in the public square like the roving balladeers of his childhood, a whole continent was felt to speak.

What did it say? The question is tricky because the novel declaims with two radically different voices. Describe its subject, and you end up with adjectives like "bleak," "bitter" and "disillusioned." Think of its style, and the terms are more likely to be "delightful," "exuberant" and "life-affirming." The novel's characters are solitary, self-involved, at times even monstrous, and yet, through the frantic lovability of their creator's prose, they also become irresistible. Once we've finished with Borges and Faulkner, Kafka and Woolf, Rabelais and Cervantes and the *Thousand and One Nights*, realisms neo- and magic and all the other influences we can pick out of the work of this insatiable literary trencherman, we are left with that style as the great stamp of his originality: its propulsive momentum, its hyperbolic excess, the fat plenitude of its syntax, its vividness and variety, the sheer alertness of every phrase. Above all, its swashbuckling way with an adjective: "astonished breasts," "frugal estuary," "libertine pigs," "chronic journalist," "arbitrary anarchist," "livid saliva," "rocky" orgasms, "slow" lawns. Ordinary modifiers work to characterize their targets more precisely. These are designed to do the reverse: defamiliarize them, pull them away from our normal understanding, add a penumbra of

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imaginative color, bring out their strange, human hearts. In short, be the magic to their realism. Nouns are objects, obdurate and obvious. Adjectives, García Márquez implies, are what we make of them.

This struggle between reality and subjectivity, encoded in his very syntax as in his most characteristic technique, is García Márquez's essential subject. We can see it in his taste for paradox: "I was always famous, from the time I was born," he once told a friend. "It's just that I was the only one who knew it." Will, as long as life itself, butting its head against the world. More than one of his novels end with such a flourish of insane defiance. *No One Writes to the Colonel*: "And meanwhile what do we eat?" "Shit." *Love in the Time of Cholera*: "And how long do you think we can keep up this goddamn coming and going?" "Forever." We can also see it in the way he handles speech, of which these outbursts are characteristic. García Márquez has acknowledged his difficulties with dialogue, but he learned how to circumvent them by using it sparingly and setting it as carefully as a jeweler. Long passages of pell-mell narration are brought to a climax by one-line declarations as indelible as maxims: "You're a woman, little sister"; "Don't be simple, Crespi.... I wouldn't marry you even if I were dead." The narrative, a rushing current of event that threatens to pull the characters under; the utterance, a vaunting assertion of desire.

For García Márquez, delight is just as valid a measure of literary value as difficulty.

Will narrowed on a single object and fixed in the face of adversity, even hopelessness—this is what gives so many of his figures their magnitude and memorability. Colonel Aureliano Buendía fighting thirty-two wars and losing them all. That other colonel waiting fifty-six years for his pension. Florentino Ariza waiting even longer for his love. And, conversely, the monumental appetites: José Arcadio drinking sixteen raw eggs and laying every woman in sight; the wedding party in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, which drinks the town dry. These are the pans of García Márquez's emotional balance: grim determination, bitter resignation and mordant disillusionment, on the one hand; epic explosions of revelry and revolution, on the other. And this is how his impossible fusion of subject and tone gives utterance to the Latin American soul: by fronting the continent's tragic history with the unquenchable fiesta of his style. The betrayal of fate, the madness of power, the indifference of death: realism. Imagination, laughter, music and hope: magic.

Poetry, Auden said, makes nothing happen. It is not a revolution, not an election, not even a platform. García Márquez understood that the highest service literature can perform is to give people an image of their historical reality, especially the way that reality has shaped their souls. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is political for the same reason neorealism is: it shows us not only the lives of ordinary people but also the political context that creates them and the historical context that creates that. For García Márquez, the most important fact of Latin American history, more important even than the malign influence of the United States, is inertia: of the oligarchies, of the church, of tradition, of corruption, of the whole eternal way of doing business. The Colonel is defeated despite his heroic efforts; his seventeen sons, a seemingly inexhaustible posterity, are exterminated; the banana workers are gunned down. That the novel depicts the futility and viciousness of public life, that its characters finally withdraw from politics in exhaustion and despair—these are arguments not against political action but in favor of it. What form such action might take to escape the nightmare of history lies beyond the novel's horizon, but eight years after the Cuban revolution, it did not lie beyond that of its author or its audience.

The proof that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* got the Latin American situation supremely right, artistically if not politically, is the delirious adulation with which its author has been received in the region from that moment to this. Its publication consigned García Márquez himself to the realm of legend. The career of this master of the superlative would henceforth be describable only in superlatives. Three weeks after the book came out, his appearance in the audience ignited a standing ovation in the most prestigious cultural venue in Buenos Aires, the most sophisticated of Latin American capitals. It was 1967; he had become, virtually overnight, the Beatles of Latin American fiction. Everyone wanted to meet him, and over the next few years, he spiraled ever higher through the ether of renown. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, in 1981, had an initial print run of 2 million, the largest in world history for a work of literature. His ovation at the Nobel ceremonies—he received the prize the following year, after some deft backchannel maneuvering—was the longest in the annals of the event.

Now he had something to offer the revolution, putting both his celebrity and his pen at Castro's service. He has been criticized, sometimes excoriated, for his enduring loyalty to the man, a commitment that appears compounded of friendship, stubbornness and the conviction that whatever the crimes of the regime, the alternative, given Latin American history and Cuba's proximity to the United States, is likely to have been worse. In any case, his contributions to the country, and the region, were more than rhetorical. He would go on to set up a film institute on the island and, later, an institute of journalism in Colombia. Meanwhile, he had become a kind of roving ambassador for the cause of Latin American progress among the heads of state with whom he mixed on terms of equality and friendship: Omar Torrijos of Panama, Felipe González of Spain, Olof Palme of Sweden, François Mitterrand, various presidents of Colombia and Mexico, and eventually even Bill Clinton—the convergence of two lonely provincial boys who wanted to become friends with everybody.

Whether these efforts produced much in the way of concrete diplomatic results or were only the means of indulging a love of proximity to power has been another point of controversy. Certainly they produced artistic results in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and *The General in His Labyrinth*, both deeply informed by their author's intimacy with men of power. In any case, advancing age and the fading of his cohort from the scene have made such questions moot. García Márquez has long since become a kind of suprapolitical figure, not a living national treasure but a global one. His eightieth birthday celebrations two years ago lasted eight weeks and were attended by a roster of international dignitaries, including five presidents of Colombia and the king and queen of Spain.

And through it all, until just a few years ago, he maintained his phenomenal productivity and undaunted search for new literary possibilities. With the exception of a few minor works, he never allowed his approach to degenerate into an easily reproducible "brand." *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was followed, after agonies of writer's block, by *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, a complexly

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Modernist "dictator novel" regarded by critics as his second-greatest work. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, that master class in narrative construction, was succeeded by *Love in the Time of Cholera*, his second most popular. *The General in His Labyrinth*, a fictionalized biography of Bolívar, represented marathons of historical research; *News of a Kidnapping*—he was pushing 70 by this point—a comparable effort of journalistic investigation. With his tireless diplomacy and pitiless appetite for friendship, his zealous involvement with his institutes and continuing contributions to periodical journalism (he wrote a newspaper column that ran weekly for nearly four years, uninterrupted even by the Nobel Prize), one gets the impression of a man who took occasional breaks to write novels. Only the waning of his memory in recent years has forced him into retirement. Martin's standard-setting biography comes at the perfect moment, on the brink of its subject's passage into a long and grateful posterity.

García Márquez set out to rival the great figures of Modernism. Did he succeed? A widespread judgment within the Spanish-speaking world regards him as the greatest writer in the language since Cervantes. While a longer retrospect might overturn that enthusiasm, less debatable is his status as the most important writer of the second half of the twentieth century in any language, the premier voice of the developing world and, as the man who brought magic realism to its height of possibility, the exponent of an entirely new mode of metaphoric expression. In any case, comparisons with Joyce and Woolf and Faulkner miss the most important thing about his achievement: that in rivaling Modernism, he ended by annulling its aesthetic standards. García Márquez showed us that delight is just as valid a measure of literary value as difficulty, that psychology can be revealed as effectively through action as introspection, that transparent structures can be as sophisticated as ones that flaunt their complications. For half a century, *Ulysses* was the mountain that all writers worked in the shadow of. Instead of going to the mountain, García Márquez brought the mountain to himself. Now he's the one casting the shadow (as the career of Roberto Bolaño, artist of exhaustion, Beckett to his Joyce, has demonstrated). The greatest works convert us to their aesthetic faith. When I read Joyce, I think that nothing could be better and that this is the only way that fiction should be written. And when I read García Márquez, I think the same thing. ■

Cornucopia Blues

by BRENT CUNNINGHAM

When in 2003 famine pushed 14 million Ethiopians to the brink of starvation, it did so despite the fact that Ethiopian farmers had recently reaped a series of unprecedented bumper harvests. It did so while hundreds of thousands of tons of grain lay rotting in the countryside and acres of fertile farmland sat fallow. And it did so as politicians in the United States advocated alleviating poverty in the developing world as a way to subdue breeding grounds for terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11. In March 2002 President Bush told a gathering of world leaders at the Summit on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico: "We fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror." Yet two months later, Bush signed into law a new farm bill that increased the huge subsidies paid to American farmers, thereby ensuring that their unsubsidized counterparts in Ethiopia and the rest of the developing world would continue to have no hope of competing in the global food market.

Drought was the proximate cause of the 2003 famine, but the true culprit, as Roger Thurow and Scott Kilman make clear in *Enough: Why the World's Poorest Starve in an Age of Plenty*, were the policies known as "structural adjustment" that Western governments—under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank—have forced on Africa since the 1980s. These policies pressure African governments to stop investing in local agriculture—a sector in which it was deemed that Africa lacks a "comparative advantage"—and instead to import food from the developed world. Structural adjustment is couched in the language of free trade, but it is really just the handmaiden of subsidy schemes that prop up farmers in the United States and Western Europe. Subsidies encourage the production of massive surpluses of corn, wheat and other commodity crops, and structural adjustment guarantees foreign markets for them. Structural adjustment, Thurow and Kilman explain, assumed that the private sector in Africa would expand to fill the void created when governments pulled out of agriculture. For a variety of reasons—political corruption, war, the anemic nature of private enterprise in many countries—that never happened. The result was a complete lack of the kind of market infrastructure—transportation, storage facilities, price controls—that is necessary to minimize risk and encourage farmers to invest in their land.

As the Ethiopian famine was providing devastating proof that Western governments have failed to help African nations develop their own sustainable food supplies, a handful of writers in the United States were addressing the question of food and sustainability from a different, if related, perspective. Prominent among them was Michael Pollan, who in a series of articles published in *The New York Times Magazine* and elsewhere from 2001 to 2004 was laying the foundation for *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, published in 2006. A groundbreaking

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REUTERS/GEORGE MULALA

A guard protects flour rations donated by the United States at a feeding center in Wollo, Ethiopia, in 2001.

Enough
Why the World's Poorest Starve in an Age of Plenty.
By Roger Thurow and Scott Kilman.
PublicAffairs. 302 pp. $27.95.

Famine
A Short History.
By Cormac Ó Gráda.
Princeton. 327 pp. $27.95.

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examination of how food is produced and consumed in America, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* quickly became the manifesto for good-food revolutionaries seeking to replace our wasteful, impracticable and cruel industrial food chain with a patchwork of smaller organic farms and regional food sheds—with, in other words, a sustainable system of food production.

Pollan's book does not discuss famine, and Thurow and Kilman, two *Wall Street Journal* reporters whose book grew out of a series of articles they wrote on famine and food aid, do not address America's good-food revolution. But the issues at the heart of both books are stubbornly connected: the problem of ensuring that everyone has enough food to eat is inextricable from the problem of ensuring that food is produced in a sustainable manner. A central impediment to solving both problems is Big Agriculture and its entrenched interests—including those subsidy schemes that encourage American farmers to overproduce. Thurow and Kilman manage to distill, in one outrageous paragraph, what an imposing impediment it is. They describe how, in the years following the 2003 famine, an effort by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and others to replace the policies of structural adjustment with ones that would help Africa become agriculturally self-sufficient was derailed when the US Congress once again appeased Big Agriculture:

> The legislation behind farm subsidies had been structured to make it unusually hard to undo. Unlike many laws, which automatically expire on a predetermined date, the laws underlying subsidies weren't programmed to end. Instead, if Congress didn't craft and enact a new farm bill every five years or so, the law reverted back to the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 and the Agriculture Act of 1949, which contained even sweeter payments to some farmers.

The subsidies are either extended or they become even more onerous. Anyone who can get such legislation enacted—and manage to protect it over six decades—will be a shrewd and powerful opponent, one not easily undone by Annan and other high-profile activists, and certainly not by the vote-with-your-fork ethos the good-food revolution has advocated thus far.

Since the publication of Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* in 2001 and *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, both excellent and indispensable books, there has developed a cottage industry of publications, documentaries, panels and lectures about the industrialized food chain, all basically reiterating what Pollan and Schlosser said first and best: the way Americans eat is unsustainable, morally indefensible and slowly killing us. It is unsustainable because it depends on cheap oil, in the form of petroleum-based fertilizers and pesticides and the fuel required for planting, harvesting, processing and transporting food from the field to markets around the globe. It is immoral because it exploits the poor and often undocumented workers who pick produce and process meat (to say nothing of its treatment of the animals we eat). It is slowly killing us because of the various health problems—obesity and diabetes chief among them—that a diet of processed food can cause or exacerbate.

American agriculture is at the center of an ever more global web of food trade and aid.

It is always easier, of course, to identify a problem than to solve it, but the good-food revolution feels stuck, unsure how to move beyond its evangelical phase, which has been fairly successful in raising awareness about the ills of the industrial food chain. To be sure, far from the panel-and-documentary circuit, some important work is under way to change how our food is produced and consumed: the efforts by governments and nonprofits to make farmers' markets food-stamp friendly; the growth in states and cities of food-policy councils, which bring together citizens, government officials and other stakeholders in the food system to work on all manner of food-related issues; the increasing number of mayors who are adding good-food initiatives to their agendas (in June the annual US Conference of Mayors adopted a resolution urging President Obama to "seek out partnerships with Mayors on Local Food initiatives to develop strategies that help urban America develop better access to quality food"). Yet these efforts are nascent and uneven, and the tenor of the movement is still dominated by big ideas with a facile and vaguely paternalistic quality that is frustrating. Eat less meat. Plant a garden. Cook. Understand that "cheap" food has hidden costs. Appoint a food czar.

Earlier this year, Jane Black, a food writer at the *Washington Post*, suggested that the good-food movement has a message problem—that in asking to fix everything at once, it hurts its chances of fixing anything at all. Black's article appeared on the heels of a series of pricey charity dinners organized in Washington by the pioneering chef Alice Waters, *Gourmet* editor in chief Ruth Reichl and others as part of the festivities surrounding Obama's inauguration. The idea was to place the food revolution alongside the new administration's other top priorities. Black was skeptical of the strategy, even as she supported the goal. "Whether you're Detroit, which just won $25 billion in bailout money, or the International Sleep Products Association, which is currently asking Congress to add a $5,000 tax credit for consumers to buy furniture to the new stimulus bill, the key to success is focus," she wrote. "By contrast, the sustainable food movement is asking for a fundamental overhaul of the entire U.S. food system—and everybody has their own ideas of how to begin."

Black's constructive criticism provoked a defensiveness—at least publicly—among some good-food advocates that was disheartening. Rather than address Black's argument, Reichl dug in and shouted past it. "We want to change it all," she declared on WNYC's *The Leonard Lopate Show*. "Who doesn't think that obesity is a problem, and by the way pesticides are a problem, and social justice for farmworkers is a problem?" Who indeed? In February, Waters responded with an op-ed in the *New York Times* in which she called for a tripling of the funding for the National School Lunch Program, from $9 billion a year to $27 billion. Specific? Very. Realistic? Hardly.

I'm sympathetic to the goals of the good-food revolution. I cook. I shop at farmers' markets. I buy organic food when I can afford to. I support the revolution's vision of a safer, healthier, more equitable approach to food production. But Thurow and Kilman's study of famine, as well as another new book on the subject—*Famine: A Short History*, by Cormac Ó Gráda—have left me wondering whether the good-food movement as a whole grasps that "changing it all" involves much more than moral suasion, that large-scale solutions to the problem of creating a sustainable system of food production will require compromise, patience, a clear focus on

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achievable goals and a realization that these problems are global, not national. Can the revolutionaries stomach solutions that move beyond their lovingly cultivated ideals and engage the realities—political, economic and cultural—those ideals are pitted against? One thing that Thurow, Kilman and Ó Gráda make clear is that no matter how just your cause, victory is not guaranteed. "Since the time of the Green Revolution," Thurow and Kilman write, referring to the massive transformation of agriculture that did much to eradicate famine in Latin America and Asia in the decades following World War II, "the world has known how to end famine and tame chronic hunger.... But we haven't done it."

For better or worse, American agriculture is at the center of an ever more global, interconnected web of food production, trade and aid. The United States could no more remake its food system without regard to agricultural policies and food supplies in the rest of the world than it could withdraw from the international finance system, say, or bring home all its military troops. How, for instance, do we persuade the growing number of people in countries like China and India that they should resist the allure of the meat-heavy diet that many in the West take for granted now that rising living standards have put it within their reach for the first time in their lives?

And what of American food aid, which constitutes half of all international food aid? It is a big business, one that has been conjoined for sixty years with the surplus commodity crops that our industrial agriculture system is designed to produce, and one that cloaks itself in moral imperative. In the wake of World War II, food aid was central to the Marshall Plan, and as Ó Gráda explains, "the explicit aim of Public Law 480, passed in 1954, was 'to lay the basis for a permanent expansion of our exports of agricultural products with lasting benefits to ourselves and peoples of other lands.'" To accomplish this, the law stipulated that American food aid be actual food, not cash, and that the food be purchased exclusively in the United States. This requirement created a powerful alliance among the constituencies that stood to profit from this arrangement, the so-called Iron Triangle of farmers and other agriculture players, shippers and humanitarian groups that distribute the food.

In *Enough*, Thurow and Kilman relay an anecdote about Ethiopia during the 2003 famine that shows the grim consequences of the Iron Triangle's stranglehold on food aid. As trucks laden with 1 million tons of US corn, wheat, peas, beans and lentils rolled into Nazareth, a city of around 230,000 people in central Ethiopia, they passed warehouses stuffed with 100,000 metric tons of Ethiopian grains, beans and peas—the surplus from a bumper crop two years earlier that had failed to sell when prices collapsed. (Here again was the legacy of structural adjustment: the dearth of storage facilities meant that farmers had no choice but to dump their grain on the market at the same time; and the stunted internal markets and an ancient transportation network that still relied heavily on donkeys meant that there was no way to move the glut of grain to the parts of the country that needed it.) The market was undermined further by the arrival of international food aid. "American farmers have a market in Ethiopia, but we don't have a market in Ethiopia," huffed Kadir Geleto, who managed a grain-trading operation in Nazareth.

Geleto understood that Ethiopian-grown grain alone couldn't feed the hungry when the rains failed, but he also knew that the deluge of American food aid had created a cycle of dependency that sapped the incentive of many of his countrymen to work to feed their families. Why, Geleto wondered, didn't America provide cash aid to buy up the local surplus and then send food aid to cover the rest of the shortage?

During the 2003 famine, Andrew Natsios, the administrator of the US Agency for International Development, asked the same question. He knew that if he had the flexibility to buy surplus grain in Ethiopia, food aid would be cheaper and made available to the hungry faster than food shipped from the United States. As Thurow and Kilman write in *Enough*, Natsios also knew that the Iron Triangle had consistently quashed efforts to allow for such flexibility in American food policy. But by 2005, with the reverberations from the 2003 famine keeping world leaders nominally focused on ending hunger in Africa, Natsios convinced President Bush that "reforming the...food-aid program would complement his initiative to end famine in the Horn of Africa." Bush's budget that year included a proposal that one-quarter of the $1.2 billion in food-aid money be used to buy African crops. But when Natsios presented the idea in April of that year to the annual food-aid industry conference in Kansas City, he was nearly run out of town. Robert Zachritz of World Vision, a Christian aid group, described the reception Natsios received as "hostile." The law governing food aid didn't change. As Ó Gráda notes in *Famine*, "Public Law 480 has allowed U.S. food producers to

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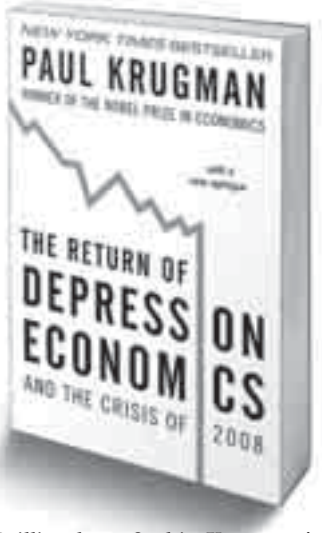

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The globalization issue is further complicated by the charged debate over genetically modified crops. GM, or transgenic, crops are anathema to many in the good-food movement, who argue that they are a threat to biodiversity and may not be safe for human consumption, and note that the promise of significantly higher yields from GM seeds has by and large not materialized. The biodiversity issue, in particular, is troubling. The makers of GM seeds patent their products, thereby forcing farmers who would normally husband seeds from one crop for the next to buy expensive GM seeds each year. Given this level of corporate control, and the fact that so few crops are grown commercially (about 150, as opposed to the 7,000 or so that figure prominently in the diets of poor people around the world), there is legitimate concern that if the use of GM crops continues to expand, the biodiversity necessary to sustain subsistence agriculture in the developing world will be lost, turning farmers there into the serfs of giant seed companies.

How can people be persuaded to change their behavior about something as intimate as food?

In some ways, the revolutionaries have an easy target. Monsanto and the other GM seed makers have billed their crops as part of an effort to stamp out world hunger. "Produce More. Conserve More. Improve Farmers' Lives," reads the motto on Monsanto's website. But this credo is disingenuous, since Monsanto has thus far failed to invest seriously in research for the kinds of seeds (such as millet, sorghum and groundnut) and seed traits (tolerance of salt, drought, acidity) that would serve the needs of populations in those parts of the world where chronic hunger and famine persist. Instead, Monsanto and other agribusiness giants have preferred to focus their research and development on big commodity crops, such as corn and soybeans, and on the production of crops for ethanol. Given this, it is easy to wonder whether solving world hunger is as important to Monsanto as it claims.

Yet Monsanto's corporate motives shouldn't discredit the need for a discussion about the potential of GM crops. There are enough unresolved questions about transgenic seeds—concerning both their performance to date and their potential—that to rule them out as part of a global solution to hunger would be shortsighted. For instance, world population is currently 6.5 billion, and it is expected to rise to more than 9 billion by midcentury. In many of the world's most vulnerable societies, people are living longer and the fertility rate continues to rise. Even the most extreme GM opponent must concede that if the current food system leaves some 1 billion people suffering from hunger and malnutrition—the largest number since the 1970s—then the question of how those additional millions of people will be fed in the future is a difficult one.

Another difficult issue is the likelihood of farmers being forced to adapt to a range of new and extreme environmental conditions stemming from climate change. A recent study by the Program on Food Security and the Environment at Stanford University and the Rome-based Global Crop Diversity Trust, for example, suggests that over the next forty years farmers in Africa will need seeds that can grow in temperatures "hotter than any year in historical experience." In light of this, it's crucial that the development of transgenic seeds capable of growing in very acidic soils, or in drought conditions, or on a diet of saltwater, be pursued, even if the business rules governing it (and the ways the technology and intellectual property are made available to farmers) need to be radically reconceived in order to ensure that GM seed development is more sensitive to the commonweal than to the price of a company's common stock.

The revolutionaries would say that the effects of climate change, and hence at least part of the rationale for GM seeds, could be dramatically reduced if industrial agriculture and the sea of oil that lubricates it were replaced by organic farming. Fair enough. But the case against organic farming, traditionally, has been that it simply can't produce enough food to feed the world without a dramatic expansion of the acreage devoted to agriculture. A recent study by University of Michigan ecologists suggests that this may not be true, that average yields from organic farming are much more commensurate with the yields of conventional agriculture than critics claim. "Our models…suggest not only that organic agriculture, properly intensified, could produce much of the world's food, but also that developing countries could increase their food security with organic agriculture." But the authors of the study also offer a significant caveat that, given the political realities in Washington, puts a sobering spin on the hopeful message of their study: broad conversion from industrial to organic will be difficult—"agronomically, economically, and educationally"—and will require "a committed public."

Even without that caveat, though, how do we square this good news about the potential for organic farming to feed the world with the emerging picture of some sectors of organic farming as a deeply compromised enterprise? In *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Pollan introduces us to Gene Kahn, the founder of Cascadian Farm, which began as a communal hippie farm in 1971 and today is part of the General Mills empire—and Kahn is now a General Mills vice president. In Pollan's book, Kahn is something of a poster child for the co-optation of the organic movement by the very industrial food chain it set out to replace. In order to profit from economies of scale, Kahn went from growing his own produce to buying it from other farmers and from an alternative distribution system to a commercial one. As Pollan puts it, Kahn is unapologetic about "the compromises made along his path from organic farmer to agribusinessman" and about how, as Kahn says, "everything eventually morphs into the way the world is." Whether you think Kahn is a realist or a sellout, the lesson he offers Pollan about his efforts to reform industrial agriculture is hardly irrelevant to the renewed effort to change that system today: "We tried hard to build a cooperative community and a local food system, but at the end of the day it wasn't successful. This is just lunch for most people. *Just lunch*. We can call it sacred, we can talk about communion, but it's just lunch."

Debates in the United States and Europe over the ethics of GM crops could very well be overtaken by events. In the past five years, the amount of land in the developing world planted with GM seeds has tripled, and worldwide it has doubled. China is poised to commercialize GM rice. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, together with the Rockefeller Foundation, is pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into African agriculture—not just GM crops but soil improvement, market access and irrigation (precisely the kind of private-sector development that structural adjustment presumes). The plan, according to Peter Pringle, author of *Food, Inc.: Mendel to Monsanto—The Promises and Perils of the Biotech Harvest* (2003), includes public-private partnerships to help scien-

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tists in Africa develop their own new seeds using royalty-free biotech material and intellectual property. As Pringle puts it, "In the end, the debate over biotechnology in agriculture may well be settled…not by the arguments of advocates and critics but by the practical effects of the range of useful products available to humanity. In the meantime, it's easy to take a position pro- or anti-Bill Gates, as long as you don't have to address the problem of the world's food supply."

Perhaps the most subtle and complex challenge the good-food revolutionaries face is persuading people to change their behavior—on a mass scale and in enduring ways—about something so intimate and fundamental as food. In May I attended a screening of a new documentary called *Fresh*. Unlike the star-studded *Food, Inc.*—which features Michael Pollan and Gary Hirshberg, the founder of Stonyfield Farm (and is unrelated to Pringle's book)—*Fresh* didn't get much hype, but it delivers essentially the same message: our food industry is in need of radical change. The screening was followed by a panel discussion featuring some of the usual suspects, including Joel Salatin, the voluble Virginia farmer immortalized by Pollan in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

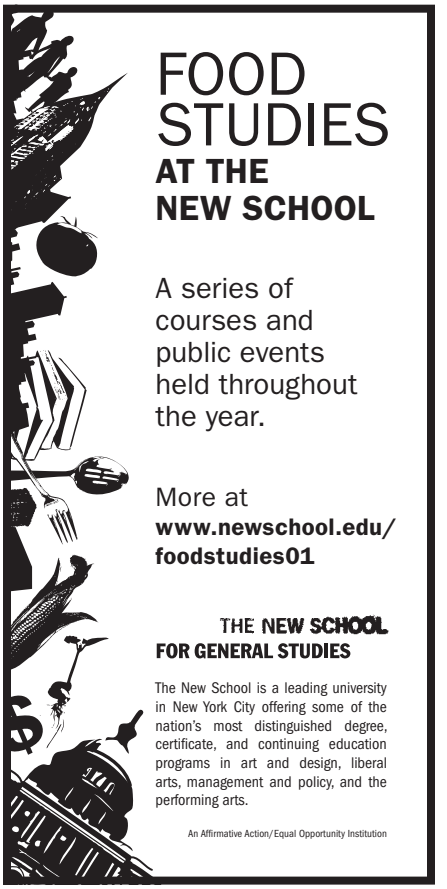
Salatin runs Polyface Farms, where the grass growing in his pastures is the basis of a sun-based, symbiotic and self-contained food chain in which all the animals he raises for food—cows, chickens, turkeys, pigs and rabbits—work in harmony to sustain the entire operation. In *The Omnivore's Dilemma* Salatin comes across as a thoroughgoing outsider, someone disgruntled with the modern world and unsparing in his critique of our food-production and consumption habits:

> Me and the folks who buy my food are like the Indians—we just want to opt out. That's all the Indians ever wanted—to keep their tepees, to give their kids herbs instead of patent medicines and leeches.… But the Western mind can't bear an opt-out option. We're going to have to refight the Battle of the Little Big Horn to preserve the right to opt out, or your grandchildren and mine will have no choice but to eat amalgamated, irradiated, genetically prostituted, barcoded, adulterated fecal spam from the centralized processing conglomerate.

Salatin is a great character, a pastoral curmudgeon, and from a purely logical and moral standpoint, his approach to farming and sustainable food may be unassailable. But it's difficult to see him as the future of sustainable farming in America, where less than 2 percent of the population is engaged in farming, down from 50 percent in 1885. Someone in the audience asked Salatin how we will get the "thousands" of farmers "like you" that we will need to see this revolution through. Salatin's answer? "One person at a time."

Granted, Salatin was speaking extemporaneously, but one person at a time is not a realistic strategy for success whether the goal is to develop new farmers or to persuade people to steer clear of McDonald's, no matter how many "healthy choices" are added to its menu—not when your opponents are as mighty as Big Agriculture, as vast as globalization, as ingrained as America's love of convenience and as mysterious as human behavior. Reading and listening to the good-food manifestoes, I get the sense that many of their authors consider the superior logic and morality of their case to be so self-evident that once everyone tastes a grass-fed steak or a free-range egg, the battle will be won. But a strategy that relies primarily on the morality of personal choice and grassroots conversion—crucial components of any solution, to be sure—will never be enough to fix what ails our food system. For evidence of just how quickly consumers can abandon the cause of sustainable agriculture, one need look no further than the hardships experienced by organic dairy farmers during the recession. After several years of double-digit growth, dairy farmers nationwide—many of whom took on significant debt to convert to organic—are being told by distributors to cut production by 20 percent this year to accommodate a deep drop in demand. Seven dollars has become too steep a price for a gallon of organic milk. "I probably wouldn't have gone organic if I knew it would end this way," one Vermont farmer told the *New York Times* earlier this year.

Ó Gráda is instructive on the difficulty of changing people's behavior, even when the brutal conditions of their lives dictate it. At one point, he compares the causes of death from famine in sub-Saharan Africa today with those in Ireland in the 1840s and India in the 1890s. "Extreme poverty is responsible for children catching deadly diseases even when their parents are familiar with the modes of transmission, simply because they cannot afford the minimal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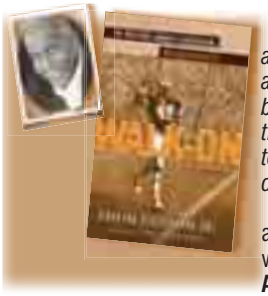

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needs for prevention. Thus, in Thane, near Bombay, a woman who had already lost two children to waterborne illnesses pointed out that 'to boil water consistently would cost the equivalent of US$4.00 in kerosene'—a third of her annual income." The problem in Thane, as in Ireland and Africa, was that "behavioral patterns and consumption were subject to a great deal of inertia. It is not enough for people in some sense to 'know' what causes disease; they have to be *persuaded* to change their behavior." If such persuasion is difficult to accomplish around life-and-death issues like disease and starvation, imagine what it will take to persuade Americans, who live in a land of convenience and processed plenty, that food is more than just lunch.

I believe that Pollan, the movement's most synthetic thinker and eloquent writer, understands that the hardest part of the revolution is still to come. In an interview last fall with Bill Moyers, he said, "I think we have to figure out different solutions in different places, and it's not all or nothing." And *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is sprinkled with moments where he touches on the jagged conflicts looming beneath the smooth surface of his narrative. "By definition local is a hard thing to sell in a global marketplace," he writes. "Local food, as opposed to organic, implies a new economy as well as a new agriculture—new social and economic relationships as well as new ecological ones. It's a lot more complicated." He even wonders at one point whether Salatin represents a case of allowing the ideal to become the enemy of the good.

At the same time, Pollan is such a clear and lyrical writer that it is easy to glean from his books the sense that the revolution is well under way, its triumph inevitable. And in fact it is under way, at least among people who have the time and money to participate. This isn't to criticize Pollan but rather to stress that the rank and file of the revolution—at least at this point—*is* elite, as the revolution's critics charge, and thus susceptible to the easy allure of an inspirational battle cry and generous portions of moral rectitude. They can afford to spend more money on better food, and so the thornier aspects of "What next?" may not necessarily engage them. I know more than a few foodies who have no desire to live like Joel Salatin, but the idea of Salatin's life—and the lives of his happy chickens and pigs—makes them feel part of something virtuous.

Stung by the charges of elitism, some good-food advocates (including Schlosser) have begun to adjust their rhetoric to include issues such as social justice for farmworkers and the importance of extending the benefits of the revolution to those who may not immediately grasp its inherent worthiness. But even so, the solutions too often remain impractical and exclusive. In his most recent book, *In Defense of Food*, Pollan offers guidelines for what to eat and how—buy a freezer, eat wild foods when you can, get out of the supermarket—that are suited to people with disposable income, not to the single mother who must feed her kids while working two jobs, negotiating the world without a car and dealing with the many other, less obvious burdens of poverty. To her, the Value Meal at the corner McDonald's is practicable; foraging for salad greens is not. For the revolution to succeed, it must find ways to make better "food decisions" practicable for her. Even if she wanted to vote with her fork, she has few realistic options as she waits for the system of agricultural subsidies to be fixed.

Last year, Michael Specter published an article in *The New Yorker* that examined the concept of the carbon footprint and cast doubt on the "widely held assumption that the ecological impacts of transporting food—particularly on airplanes over great distances—are far more significant than if that food were grown locally." Because so many variables contribute to a product's carbon footprint—including water use, cultivation and harvesting methods and the type of fuel used to manufacture the packaging—it is impossible to reduce the politics of food to a simplistic equation of local always being better than global. Given the complexity of the equation, Specter asks, "How do we alter human behavior significantly enough to limit global warming? Personal choices, no matter how virtuous, cannot do enough. It will also take laws and money."

The same is true of reforming our food system: securing money for lobbying efforts and passing the necessary laws will require getting our hands dirty in something other than organic topsoil. It will require playing the game of power politics, which means identifying specific, manageable goals, being willing to compromise and accepting the prospect of incremental change. It will mean, also, keeping foremost in mind the fact that what we do in America can have life-and-death consequences for people around the world for whom the notion of voting with their forks is a meaningless abstraction. ■

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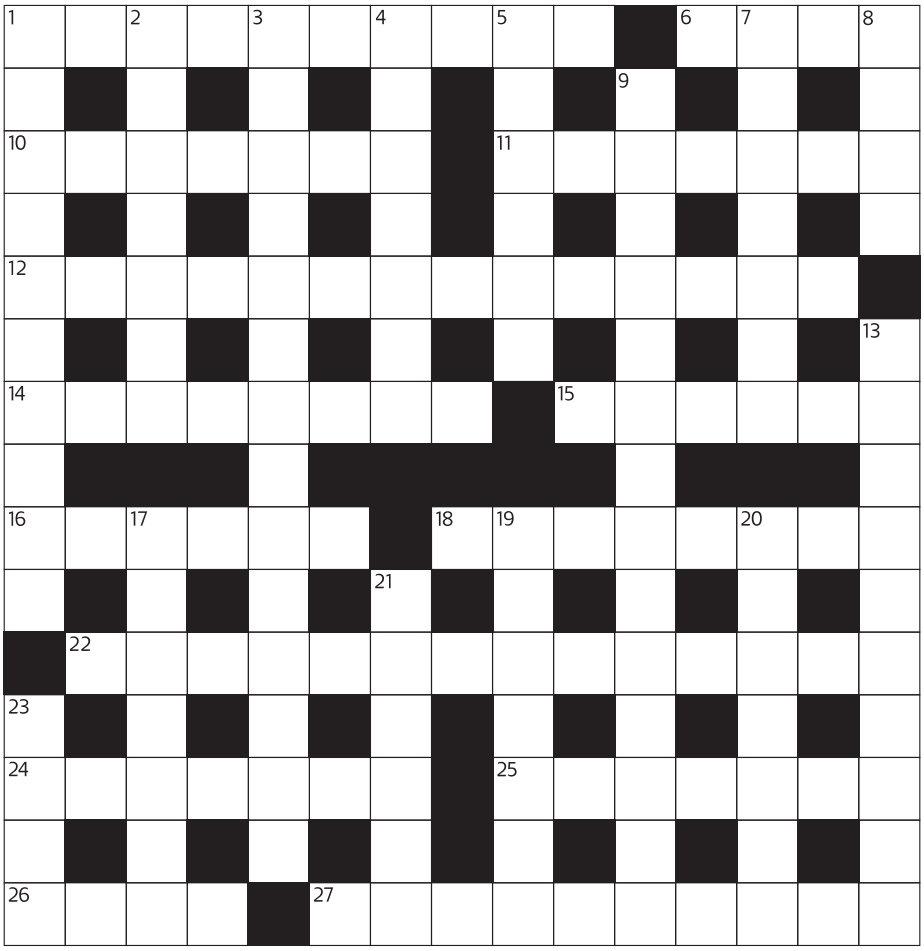

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10 Shakespearean fellow, sort of shot up, right? (7)

11 Clues go badly wrong: "It's a monosaccharide!" (7)

12 You won't drink the water if you do, and play it safe. (5,4,5)

14 All tied up with an overseas New Year's celebration at this place, to start devotions. (8)

15 Even disturbed by a word of hesitation, this would be a display only on the surface. (6)

16 They might be jabs to the jaw, but the civil type are of some concern. (6)

18 Swap evil-doing for this, but it's what one often does when seeking a new form of transportation. (6,2)

22 A questionable labor practice, but a noteworthy achievement to the woman's place of rest at the sound of a bell. (7-7)

24 What one may do to the lawn doesn't go on, but spoils the result. (4-3)

25 Work with something too much and you'll get nothing on an important day with such a stratagem. (7)

26 See 8 down

27 My casting's not good, but you might be fit to indulge in them. (10)

DOWN

1 Not down where the guns might be kept, but one possibly knocks the stuffing out of things when one does. (10)

2 Take away the value of improper trade, which should go to court shortly. (7)

3 If you make one it should at least stand for something! (14)

4 Earthy land in France—one quarter English. (7)

5 Argue over petty things to keep your spirits up over your broken leg. (6)

7 It must contain chocolate to have something like cheese around it. (7)

8 and **26** across Certainly not a rough tune for the late service. (8)

9 Represented by the capital quality of Taurus—or just a rather stubborn quality? (14)

13 Go over the limit, strangers (strangely enough) needing direction. (10)

17 Is the king upset about her being in such a pickle? (7)

19 One might get such at the sauna, but it's a funny way to manipulate a feather! (7)

20 They often get a response, but you could find it mulish, almost. (7)

21 Where one might expect to find a ringer, with a little spirit right by, surrounding it. (6)

23 Love—or so disturbed you think it's god? (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3182

T	R	A	V	E	R	S	E	D	■	E	V	I	L	S
H	■	R	■	L	■	U	■	E	■	R	■	N	■	I
U	N	C	L	A	S	P	■	M	A	N	A	G	E	D
M	■	A	■	S	■	P	■	O	■	S	■	R	■	E
B	E	D	■	T	A	L	E	N	T	■	N	A	I	L
■	■	I	■	I	■	I	■	S	■	E	■	T	■	I
T	H	A	T	C	H	E	R	■	P	I	G	E	O	N
A	■	■	■	I	■	S	■	P	■	G	■	■	■	E
I	N	G	O	T	S	■	A	R	C	H	W	A	Y	S
L	■	E	■	Y	■	A	■	O	■	T	■	L	■	■
W	A	N	T	■	S	K	E	T	C	H	■	A	D	S
I	■	E	■	T	■	I	■	R	■	N	■	B	■	T
N	O	S	T	R	U	M	■	A	V	O	C	A	D	O
D	■	I	■	A	■	B	■	C	■	T	■	M	■	O
S	A	S	S	Y	■	O	N	T	H	E	B	A	L	L

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THE Nation. Salons

Hosted by Katrina vanden Heuvel

Victor Navasky

What Will Become of the News?

Wednesday, September 23, 7:00PM

A conversation on the future of news, featuring:

COURTESY JOHN FILO

Dan Rather, former anchor for CBS Evening News; managing editor and anchor of *Dan Rather Reports*

Jane Mayer, staff writer for *The New Yorker*, is one of America's most renowned investigative reporters and the author of the bestselling book *The Dark Side*.

Marcy Wheeler, a pioneering blogger and Hillman Award winner, writes for Firedoglake.com and is the author of *Anatomy of Deceit*.

moderated by Victor Navasky

What Will Become of Our Culture?

Wednesday, November 18, 7:00PM

A conversation on the future of culture, featuring:

COURTESY TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS

Toni Morrison, a Nobel Prize winning author, is one of American literature's most productive and powerful voices.

COURTESY GLORIA WEGBRIER

Tony Kushner, a Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, is one of the country's most celebrated dramatists.

Walter Mosley, one of America's most versatile and admired writers, is the author of more than 29 critically acclaimed books.

moderated by Gene Seymour

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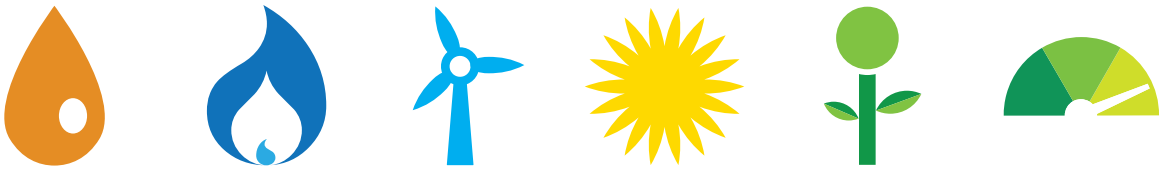

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